CASTE

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Frances Willes

By COSMO HAMILTON

ADAM'S CLAY
ANOTHER SCANDAL
A SENSE OF HUMOUR
CONFESSION
FOUR PLAYS
- THE NEW POOR
- SCANDAL
- THE SILVER FOX
- THE MOTHER WOMAN

HIS FRIEND AND HIS WIFE
HIS MAJESTY THE KING
JOAN AND THE BABIES AND I
PARADISE
SCANDAL
THE BLINDNESS OF VIRTUE
THE BLUE ROOM
THE DOOR THAT HAS NO KEY
THE INFINITE CAPACITY
THE MIRACLE OF LOVE
THE OUTPOST OF ETERNITY
THE PRINCESS OF NEW YORK
THE RUSTLE OF SILK
THE SINS OF THE CHILDREN
THE WISDOM OF FOLLY
UNWRITTEN HISTORY
CASTE
"PICKWICK"—A PLAY
(In collaboration with Frank C. Reilly)

CASTE

By

COSMO HAMILTON

AUTHOR OF "THE RUSTLE OF SILK," ETC.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK—LONDON

1927

Copyright, 1927
by
P. F. Collier & Son Co.
(*Collier's Weekly, Inc.*)

Copyright, 1927
by
Cosmo Hamilton

Made in the United States of America

CASTE

CASTE

PART I

"Pity and need
Make all flesh kin. There is no caste in blood."

I

ALL the way from London to Florence, and then up the hill to Fiesole in Erskine Farquhar's car,—and what an enchanting view there was from the terrace of the Villa Pico della Mirandola!—Mr. Reginald Walter Willett had set these words to the rhythm of the Channel steamer and the none too clean or steady train. "A very delicate bit of legal business, this. Quite the most delicate and touching bit of legal business that we have ever had to arrange. Quite."

Which went to prove that the germ of romance can wriggle from time to time even in the heart of a lawyer.

On the giddy edge of sixty, a son and grandson of lawyers, and the senior partner in the firm of Willett, Waltham and Willett, here was, in fact, a man with a legal skull in which, among "the quiddities, quillets, cases, tenures and tricks of the common law" there was a small

disturbing sympathy for the unreasonable acts of humanity, and enough imagination to see the futility of a profession which endeavours to teach men how to live but never how to die.

After a similar journey a week before he had discussed with Erskine Farquhar the deeds in which, upon his dissociating himself from the charming Mrs. Myles Shepreth,—no reason stated—the settlement of a yearly income was to be made to her. He had returned now with the wordy rigmarole for signature and attestation, and, although the settlement was sufficiently generous to place Lillian Shepreth in life-long comfort, Mr. Willett was haunted by the feeling that the break would leave her with little desire to live.

He had had no opportunity during his former visit of any private words with the lady—much to his regret. In describing her to his partner he had used the word "bewitching," an unusual word with him.

"One of those rather rare women, my dear Waltham," he had said, "who are wholly feminine, instantly commanding male chivalry and tenderness by their obvious trust and reliance; retaining the slightness and freshness of youth, and the natural colours of spring; with noticeably small wrists and ankles, large wide-apart eyes, beautiful teeth, a white skin showing blue veins; the grace and unaffected gaiety that went, one imagines, with Lady Hamilton as Romney painted her, though with a greater refinement and the advantage of better breeding; in fact, a thoroughbred Emma with no loose curls. One of those women for whom a man would be perfectly justified in ruining a career,—which she would probably help him to make."

She had disappeared to her own quarters after lunch and dinner that day and had done no more than wave her hand from an upper window when he had been escorted to the road.

But his eyes were trained to catch the thoughts and feelings of unfortunate people, and he had seen pain and heartbreak behind her laughing mask.

He knew, of course, that Farquhar had a wife and daughter in the United States. This almost grotesquely rich American had been his client for some time, and, in any case, his history, or what he allowed to be known of it, was public property. All the same, prim and unemotional as the lawyer was, it was difficult for him to understand why a man who had been in love with so delightful a woman for several years, and still appeared to be so, and who had bought the Villa Pico della Mirandola in which to pursue his surreptitious romance, should suddenly have made up his mind to evacuate the position and put up the house for sale.

He found Farquhar where he had left him. In the old stone frame of the gate his was, he considered, a most attractive figure. Slightly over six feet high, his shoulders were broad and his chest deep, and although without an ounce of superfluous flesh he wasn't thin. He was conspicuously a man who played games as much because they amused him as from a sense of bodily pride. His horror of convexity was shown by the excellence of his clothes. A fat man must be dressed by his tailor and is too far gone to care. One who exercises as a duty and merely eats to live is able to leave nothing to his tailor and be a well dressed man.

Looking at his client's small head, well-cut nose, clean

jaw line, and clear grey eyes in which there were glints of humour and kindness in contradiction to the sternness of his mouth, Mr. Willett summed up his admiration by saying to himself "He looks like one of those Englishmen who has lived mostly out of England, shot big game and roughed it, rubbed off the complacent insularity of his kind by wide travel, achieved tolerance and a sense of values by studying the psychology of other countries while looking at his own from a long perspective, but whose early training in cricket and the Army are still to be seen in his inelastic ethics and straight back."

He was on the verge of fifty-five, as Mr. Willett knew, and the fact that his moustache was red while his hair was almost white made the lawyer see in the frequent use of dye a slightly pathetic but not unpleasant conceit. The man who said that old age may come after one with the grace, force, and fascination of youth had been buried at thirty-nine.

Farquhar was cordial in his perfectly casual manner.

"Come in. How are you?" he said. "I know that the train was uncomfortable but I hope the Channel was smooth."

He put his hand under Willett's elbow and led him to the steps.

By giving no instructions to the Italian manservant, who had hurried down to the gate like an operatic tenor a little late for his cue, he paid two compliments. One to himself as a patient trainer and the other to Pietro as an apt pupil.

Willett carried his dispatch case from which he was never parted. It was old and shabby. All the same it wore an air of importance like that of an ex-Commis-

sioner of India living in Jermyn Street on an inadequate pension. It had dealt with birth and death, marriage and divorce, criminality and carelessness, and, as now, with romance and the pain which is its inevitable sequel.

He said, puffing a little on the way up the sloping garden, "How lovely it is here! How magic Florence looks from this aspect! Yes, thank you, the Channel was fairly smooth, although one was not inclined to believe it from the behaviour of the boat. The train . . . quite."

He threw up the fingers of his left hand and in that stiff gesture said everything legal on the subject of dirt, smoke, tunnels and Chianti.

Farquhar led the way into the loggia in which he read the Paris edition of the New York Herald, wrote unavoidable letters, revelled in occasional solitude and smoked his pipe. It was the only room in the Villa in which the furniture was not Italian. It had the sort of armchairs in which a man can sit; bookshelves, heads of big game, and the smell of Harris tweed.

"What would you like to do? Read your papers now and get 'em out of the way,—there's an hour before lunch,—or put the business off until this evening and come for a stroll in the garden? It's all the same to me."

"Quite," said Mr. Willett, for no apparent reason, though he might have been marking time. As a matter of fact he was keen to attend to business at once and make his short visit to that lovely spot a sort of holiday. He enjoyed very few. "Then, I think perhaps . . ."

He went to the writing table and opened his case. His

papers were blue and thick. They were also neat and cold, although the legal handwriting on their outsides had the usual inconsistent flourishes.

"All right," said Farquhar. "Let me light a pipe before you shoot."

He did so while Mr. Willett changed his glasses and his attitude. Spectacles took the place of pince-nez and the manner of Lincolns' Inn Fields that of hale-fellow. He looked pale, gaunt, and dispeptic in contrast with the easy, athletic, unworried man whose not easily concentrated attention he was about to obtain.

It was not a very long reading. It would have been considerably shorter but for the tiresome repetition of those stucco legal words.

Out of them all the said Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar was led to surmise that he had settled the sum of five thousand pounds a year upon the said Lillian Shepreth which was to be paid quarterly by the said Willett, Waltham and Willett to the said Lillian Shepreth for the remainder and continuance of her life, and upon the death or demise of the said Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar, should it occur before or prior to that of the said Lillian Shepreth, such yearly or annual sum was to be paid out of the deceased's estate by the said Willett, Waltham and Willett of the said address, viz;—36, Lincolns' Inn Fields, London, W.C.1. in the said manner.

And having finished, Mr. Willett stood up, dipped a pen into the ink and held it out to his client.

Farquhar made no move for several moments. He sat with his legs stretched out, his hands on the arms of the chair and his chin upon his tie. His eyes were as stern as his mouth for once. Finally, with something

between a laugh and a groan, he got up, went to the writing table and signed his name.

"The beginning of the end," he said. "To quote the words of Marcus Aurelius which shocked me the other day 'Be not as one that has ten thousand years to live; death is nigh at hand; while thou livest, while thou hast time, be good!' "

II

They adjourned immediately to the upper terrace.

All that was feminine in Mr. Willett, and there was a good deal, which naturally accounted for his being so noted a divorce lawyer, made him eager for an explanation of Farquhar's move. Curiosity was not the only sensation that had been stirred in him by this break up. There was deep sympathy too, principally for the little lady in the case. He saw nothing in the quotation from Marcus Aurelius that could shock a man who was merely fifty-five into bringing his love life to an end. Many men, having arrived at money and leisure, lived down disappointments, ingratitude and disillusion, made love a hobby at fifty-five. It is the gullable age. To the unmedical eye Farquhar wore the look of robust health. He might have been at least ten years younger than he was. If he had been warned that "death was nigh" by his doctor he must have said so when the settlement had been discussed. He must have spoken about his will. Obviously, therefore, he had arrived at a reluctant decision to "be good" for some other reason. Mr. Willett was not the sort of man who forced the confidences of his

clients by indiscreet questions, greatly as he was tempted to do so in this affair. It was characteristic of Farquhar to say the fewest number of words on the fewest number of subjects, among which he himself never found a place. And so it was more than likely, Willett thought, that he must return to London as much in the dark in regard to the motives which had led to this very delicate bit of legal business as he was at that moment.

"Are you going back tomorrow?" asked Farquhar, "or shall you potter about Florence for a day or two? You love the place, I know. So do I."

"Quite," said Willett. "No. I'm going back tomorrow. I'm very busy just now. I take a month when the courts rise. Golf at Crowborough, as usual."

"I'll keep you company then. I'm sailing for America on Saturday. I want a couple of days in London."

"America—on Saturday?"

Surprise caused Mr. Willett to echo these words. It was the first that he had heard of it. Why hadn't his office been used to book a passage and arrange the necessary details? A curiously independent person, this man, and like a deer for reserve.

Farquhar knocked out his pipe on the stonework.

"I'm going home," he said.

Mr. Willett forgot his legal training so far as to let his eagerness for an explanation flick into his eyes.

Pietro came out and burst into recitative. He spoke in his native dramatic language, of which Willett knew only those few words that bewilder the pouncing porters who swarm upon a train. From the accompaniment of gestures he gathered, however, that someone had called

to see Farquhar, and was less annoyed at the interruption when, on being left alone, Mrs. Shepreth rounded the angle of the Villa. It somehow occurred to Mr. Willett that she had seen Farquhar's temporary disappearance from a convenient window.

"Oh, how do you do," he said, with the warmth of a London grate. Long practice in being impersonal had left him incapable of glow. "I'm delighted to see you again."

Mrs. Shepreth gave him a sunny smile and held out her hand. A small, emotional, but courageous hand. She had taken at least an hour to hide the fact that she had been weeping. Only a woman or a lover would have discovered it.

"I'm very well," she answered "and so glad to see you again. I'm sorry I wasn't down when you left last week."

"I'm sorry too."

He thought that she looked—the word came to him again,—bewitching in her small felt hat of mousy brown with a rather cocky brim. He liked her coat with a fur collar under which he could see a very feminine frock, soft, and with all colours of a herbaceous border. Her Marie Antoinette feet were in thin, high heeled shoes. He saw that her nails were pink and that whatever she used to spite the hand of time was put on not with the general clumsiness of hurried and unpunctual women, with the usual painful results, but with the touch of an artist, undetectable.

She knew that Farquhar had been called away to interview a man about the removal of his luggage, a

voluble actor, a comedian, to whom everything had to be repeated over and over again. It would give her time to put a few vital questions to the lawyer. And so like every other woman she started off at a tangent.

"Do you know that this is the last time you'll look down at Florence from this Villa,—unless, of course, you happen to be a friend of the people who buy it from Mr. Farquhar?"

"Quite."

He was distinctly uncomfortable. His client was a generous man. He wondered again why he hadn't made it over to Mrs. Shepreth.

For the purpose of finding out he added, "I rather hoped to hear that *you* had decided to buy it."

She shook her head with her eyes shut, and put a hand to her breast.

From which he saw that it had been offered and refused. He had enough imagination to understand her reason. But he was glad to know that his high estimation of Farquhar was so instantly confirmed.

"When I'm in London on Monday," she said, coming to the point, "will you give me half an hour in the morning,—not too early?"

"Any time," he said.

"I've decided to rent a furnished house, a little one, possibly in Knightsbridge. I want to ask you to help me."

"I will help you."

"William Street or Wilton Place, I think. During the first year of my marriage I used to come from Aldershot to stay with a sister at the Hyde Park Hotel and I rather fancied those streets. And when my husband was killed

in 1915 I had a flat in Sloane Street for nearly eighteen months. I've not been in London since then."

"I think I can get what you need. A little noisier now, though. Much heavier motor traffic everywhere since then."

"That's what I want," she said. "Noise and people. I want to be within twenty steps of the main road,—a change from this. The exact opposite." She looked straight at him without a flicker, without the slightest tremble of her lips. "I must pick up lost threads and find old friends, go everywhere, see everything and move in and out with the tide. I have been in harbour, you see."

"Quite," he said, "Quite," and bowed.

He had committed himself to her being a rare woman. She confirmed his opinion. She was not going to mope and place funeral flowers on the grave of her love, nor wear the martyr's wreath and ashcloth. She would go to the grave, place a bunch of everlasting blossoms upon it, and, like a good soldier, march away to a quick tune and hold up her chin. She would instruct her courage to be proud.

"Most certainly I will help you."

"You're very kind," she said. "I'm afraid I shall feel rather like an escaped canary when I leave Fiesole. But will you please bear in mind that I don't want anything expensive? A really little house with a yard for my dog to run in. I'm thankful to say that I have a nephew to look after. I'm going to send him to Oxford and do him as well as I can. Having come to the end of everything that matters to me I shall take great joy in giving youth a chance."

He bowed again in his ungraceful way, and then

looked into her eyes. They were a little wet. But her grief was crowned with consolation. He said to himself, with quite unlegal emotion,

"That which we look on with unselfish love
And true humility, is surely ours,
Even as a lake looks at the stars above
And makes within itself a heaven of stars."

III

Willett had remained a bachelor all his life not because he was a mysogenist, or feared the responsibility of children—far from it,—but because he had suffered from what Freud calls, with his genius for inventing new names for old troubles, the inferiority complex. At twenty-two, a member of St. John's College, Oxford, he had fallen heroically in love with one of the cool and speculative daughters of an aristocratic Micawber who had taken a house on the outskirts of the town for the purpose of lifting undergraduate money by cards, roulette and blackmail. The fourth son of a horse-racing Peer, who had gone in and out of the Bankruptcy Court with good natured frequency, the Honourable Victor George Egerton Sibbald regarded his four daughters as the gilt edged bonds of his late middle age.

Pinning his faith to the glitter of their ankles and the glamour of his name, rather than to the prohibited adventure of his games of chance, he paraded his not unlovely girls before the awakening eyes of naïve eligible lads with a view to marriage. Three of them had clicked successfully with the adventitious aids of champagne, a

revolver and the fear of nasty publicity, and the fourth, a long legged yearling, accepted the Ivanhoe proposal of young Willett under the erroneous impression that he was a man of means. He had walked on air for several weeks and lived in Paradise. When, however, it was discovered that he was the son of the junior member of his father's firm, and must be no more than a privileged clerk for a problematical time, he had been turned down in favour of a man at Brasenose whose father had made a fortune by the concoction of a pickle.

Evelyn Sibbald, who had a spot of kindness in her commercial heart, was touched by the inarticulate agony of the gauche and raw-boned youth. She let him down as lightly as she could by explaining, quite frankly, the necessity of her marrying money. This, with the evidence of her father's prosperity before him,—the house was large, lavish and full of servants—Willett refused to believe. It became his fixed idea that he had been chucked because he was ugly,—an unattractive creature with large hands and feet and strangely unruly hair, and had never ventured again. Which isn't to say that he had been immune to the disturbance of nature's old felicities or blind to the fascination of female charms. But this life-long sense of inferiority had made him an unwilling St. Anthony and age had come to his rescue with the compensation of golf.

Now, in the sternness of winter, ice melted under the sun of Lillian Shepreth, of her beauty and pathetic position. And although he went through that difficult day with the deepest sympathy he rejoiced in the knowledge that he could help to make things easier for this charming woman as her legal adviser and friend.

There was a greater strain at lunch and tea than there had been at those meals on the occasion of his former visit. He sat on tenterhooks.

It seemed to him that Farquhar and Mrs. Shepreth were like two people who, after having endured the pain of saying Goodbye, were waiting in an agony of impatience for a train that had broken down.

Having nothing to say they forced themselves into the discussion of trivial things, could hardly bear to look at each other and put Willett through a series of questions for the perfectly obvious purpose of making him talk. And as he was not a good talker, although he had lived alone, and was in the habit of drawing people out and endeavouring to find the truth, there were many moments of silence which distressed them all.

It came finally, at dinner, to Farquhar's having to tell the history of the Villa, which, of course Mrs. Shepreth knew. As greatly relieved as she was by this brain wave he went into every minute detail, dwelt on its having been built by Cosimo the Elder, restored in 1456 from plans drawn by a follower of Brunelleschi and been lived in subsequently by Kings and Princes, great ladies and courtesans, and even a poet or two,—though not those who had had to depend upon infrequent inspiration for a livelihood. They must have been subsidized.

Coffee was brought into the room, hung with magnificent tapestries, with here and there an early Bellini, a Sandro Botticelli and a Fra Bartolommeo, in which a modern piano made a queer anachronism. And while Mrs. Shepreth played several of the Chopin Preludes with an artist's touch, Farquhar stood at one of the windows with his hands in his pockets, looking down through the Bib-

lical cyprus trees at the panorama of Florence with its gradually increasing lights.

It was his last night under the roof of that romantic Villa, to which he had come for several months year after year to enjoy the poetry of Fiesole and the company of the one woman of his life who had captured his love.

Of what was he thinking then? Memory, images, and precious shapes that shall not die and cannot be destroyed? Yes, most certainly. With resignation? No, of course not. With a queer hot needle of pain stitching him up, he said to himself, " 'While thou livest, while thou hast time, be good' . . . I have no choice in the matter. Age and circumstances have got me now. I'm no longer my own master. . . Mental passion is all that's left and I face the downward hill. Compensations? Are there any? I doubt it,—unless one finds them in death."

The lamps had not been lighted in the room. And at the moment when the last lingering rearguard of the day moved on at the approach of night Mrs. Shepreth left the piano.

"Goodnight, Mr. Willett," she said. "I shan't see you again until I call at your office on Monday, a little after eleven."

"I shall look forward eagerly to that moment," he replied.

He watched her cross to the door, where Farquhar was waiting. In the vague light he saw her pause for a moment, a delicate, alluring figure, a water-colour woman. He saw Farquhar put out his hands and draw her close, bend, and kiss her. He heard a sort of cry, a choke, and saw her disappear.

It was many minutes before Farquhar attempted to speak.

"Let's go into my room," he said. His voice even then was not steady.

It was cheerful there. The lamps were on, the curtains drawn, and the fire burning. It was by no means warm outside. It seemed to Willett that he had passed in a few steps from fourteen hundred to nineteen twenty-six.

A footman followed them in with a tray of decanters, glasses and syphons. He shot a look round the room before he went out and shook his dark head sadly. As plainly as with words, even his florid stream, he gave out that it was a damned shame that the Villa was to be closed and that he must lose so easy and comfortable a job simply because the master desired new pastures. The poor Signora! It was the only interpretation that he and the rest of the servants could devise for this disaster.

"This is the exact moment of the day for a whiskey," said Farquhar. "Say when."

Willett said it a little too soon to make the drink worth while. He had read impressive advertisements about uric acid and they haunted him.

Farquhar gave him the glass and mixed a fearless one for himself. He then placed his back to the fire in Anglo-Saxon fashion and started to load a pipe.

IV

"I'm going to England with you tomorrow, Willett, because I have several things to do before I sail. The most important is to get you to add a codicil to my will.

I am going to leave a hundred thousand pounds to Mrs. Shepreth."

"A hundred thousand pounds!" Mr. Willett rolled those fat words over his tongue with relish.

Farquhar's pipe was going well. He took a drink.

A handsome fellow, Willett thought again. Soldierly. Noticeably taunt. Might be in command of the Gordon Highlanders. He couldn't say more. It was his experience that a man of this type who stood at this hour with his back to the fireplace with a glass of whiskey, either laid down the law on his pet subject or came out of his reserve for once and talked about himself. He hoped very much that the latter would be the case. And so he made himself comfortable, said nothing, and waited.

Farquhar's ingrained reticence held him. It was with an obvious struggle that he threw it off.

"Look here, Willett," he said abruptly. "There are one or two things I see that you don't understand. I'm going to explain them to you."

"You have the whole of my attention," replied Willett, adding, "and thanks."

"About the inadequacy of this settlement, first. Mrs. Shepreth refused to let me double it. She said that she wasn't keen about being fastened upon by the gang of parasites who seem to smell the size of a lonely woman's income. All she would allow me to do was to enable her to carry on and look after her nephew in an unnoticeable way. Perhaps she's right."

"I think so," said Willett. "I am going to find a nice little house for her at once."

"Thank you. I shall be . . . deeply obliged if you will look after her for me and keep an eye on the boy."

He plucked his small moustache in order to hide the uncontrollable trouble round his mouth.

"You can rely on me," said Willett. "Utterly."

There was a moment's silence during which the mellow bell of the monastery on top of the hill, the Badia di Fiesole, tolled the hour. It had done so for nine hundred years above the wrecks of time.

"You looked sceptical this morning when I quoted Marcus Aurelius. Why was that?"

So direct a question made Willett rather painfully uncomfortable. He shifted his feet about.

"Aren't you too young and well to think about death?"

"I'm *not* thinking about it. The point is that its begun to think about me. I'm in the veteran class, worse luck."

"Technically, yes. Actually, by no means. You don't look a day over forty-five, if I may say so."

"You may," said Farquhar, with a smile in his eyes. "Then you're under the impression, like everybody else round here, that I'm a callous brute who's deserting Mrs. Shepreth."

"No, no!" said Willett, emphatically.

He had seen the embrace at the door of the room. There was the settlement too, and now the codicil.

"It would be my fault if you were. I've never let you into anything about myself during all the years that you've been doing things for me. I'm a bit of a clam, I'm afraid."

"I'm not familiar with the characteristics of the clam, but if it had even a small percentage of your kindness and generosity it must be an estimable bird."

Farquhar burst out laughing. It was the first time that

he had laughed for over a week. It was better than a tonic,—better even than whiskey.

"Having to 'be good,'" he said, "going back to that, means having to chuck self-indulgence. Retiring from the game, in fact, and watching others play. Age being pushed off the court by youth. That's what it comes to. I have a daughter you see, whose name's upon the board."

"I know," said Willett. "But, dear me, is she old enough for that?"

"Eighteen. The age when the modern girl seizes life by the throat. Having no son our hopes of the future are entirely in her hands. She's the apple of her mother's eye and mine."

"Of course," said Willett.

"If, by any chance, and the odds are on it, she should follow the example of the young anarchists of today and I should try to pull her up, I don't want her to be able to put her fingers to her nose and say "What price *you,* old bird."

"Quite," said Willett gravely.

"Well, that's the other reason for my reluctant retirement. I hope to God I'm in time."

Willett cocked his head. "Is there a doubt?" he asked.

"Yes. That's why I'm sailing on Saturday. If anyone had an airship ready to go I'd buy the thing and knock two days off the crossing."

"Then you've had bad news?"

"Bad on the face of it. Bad enough to make me look at three thousand miles of water with almost unendurable impatience."

He tapped his pipe on the ring of his little finger and

forgot to load it again. It was already becoming a habit to think less about himself than someone else.

"When I left America four months ago," he went on, "there were no signs of her having been bitten by the revolutionary microbe. She was still an amenable girl, though gay and charming, adoring her mother and devoted to me. In fact, very much to our delight, she had just become engaged to Anthony Northrup, an eligible and excellent young fellow whom we had most carefully selected for the purpose. Her marriage is now the only important thing that's left to both of us. We were all the more delighted and relieved because she was in love with Northrup and he was obsessed by her."

"Well?"

"The day before I sent for you I had a note from my wife,—one of her occasional witty letters, to which she had added a postscript with an unusually serious pen. She wrote that Jean had lately been doing everything she could to dodge young Northrup, who was frightfully upset. So far as could be seen there was no other man on the mat, but Jean's desire to give that boy the slip had been twigged by everyone. 'When I pinned her down last night, or rather at four o'clock this morning, —we happened to meet on the steps—' I know these words by heart—'she laughed, and said "Oh Mumsey, let me try my wings." ' "

"What did she mean?" asked Willett, the bewildered bachelor.

"Damned if I know," said Farquhar, the equally bewildered parent. "But the last line of my wife's obviously worried postscript was 'I'm sorry, but I think you're needed at home.' "

Willett searched his legal brain for motives.

"Don't you think that your daughter's momentary change of mood may be due to the fact that the young man has been taking her too much for granted?"

"I did,—for twenty-four hours. But the letter was followed by a cable. It blew up that idea. 'Jean,' it said, 'has broken the engagement and refuses to explain.' "

"Oh," said Willett. "The microbe has attacked her, you think?"

Farquhar threw up his hand.

Then he left the fireplace and began to walk up and down. There were anxious lines on his face. He looked every day of his fifty-five years just then.

V

When he spoke again, he said, "Willett, I've begun to be hideously afraid that fathers and mothers are bound to bear the results of their example."

"I'm afraid they are," said Willett.

"That being so it seems to me that Jean funks marriage and has chucked young Northrup, as she would have chucked any other man, because my wife and I have made it a rather tragic thing."

"Elastic,—but not tragic. That is, so far as I've surmised."

"Tragic to a young and romantic girl, with a good memory and a pretty keen observation."

"Oh," said Willett. "Why?"

"Because I don't suppose that Jean has seen her mother

and me under the same roof for more than a month at a time since she's been old enough to observe."

"If it isn't an impertinent question, didn't you,—didn't you love your wife?"

"No," said Farquhar. "And she didn't give a curse for me."

Willett had early Victorian views on the subject of marriage and wasn't even an amateur at the game. His exclamation rather naturally sounded like "Good God."

"It was a marriage of money, not love. The heads of two grotesquely rich families conceived the not unusual idea of a human combination. Those were the days when members of the younger generation could be coerced, if you remember. She was twenty and I was twenty-nine. I don't know whether she was in love with someone else. I didn't ask her. *I* was frightfully gone on an opera singer who had introduced me to life. But we carried out orders and went off on a difficult honeymoon to the joyful clang of bells. . . . Jean was the fruit of this ready-made union, the lonely blossom on the Farquhar-de Winton tree. All four grandparents were alive to celebrate the arrival. It served them damn well right it wasn't a boy."

"Um," said Willett. "Dear me."

"Since then, diametrically opposed in every mortal thing, we've done what everybody tries to do and doesn't. We've lived our own lives, I mean. I've had my affairs and she's had hers. The only discussion we ever had on these matters ended in an agreement that they should be conducted with the utmost circumspection. Both of us dreaded newspapers and turned in horror from scandal. We have put in a mutual appearance at our houses in

New York, London and Paris, and the various country places in America and England that we have taken from time to time. An ideal mismarriage, according to both of us."

Willett made a noise with his tongue.

"But," he ventured to say, after a careful pause, "has neither of you ever wanted to be married to someone else?"

It looked for a moment as though Farquhar intended to leave that question unanswered. It entailed too intimate a confidence. Then he went back to the fireplace and stood with his legs apart. His expression was that of a man who had forced himself out of his shell and was therefore open to inspection.

"Nine years ago I would have given my head to be able to marry Mrs. Shepreth." He said "I am more than ever in that mood tonight. A year or two before that my wife had skirted round the subject of divorce for the first time, from which I took it that she, too, had fallen in love. I offered, of course, to make everything perfectly easy so that she could be married again, but the papers were gloating over the dirty linen of a more than usually ghastly Society laundry case, and both of us turned from the question with icy spines. Under no imaginable circumstances could either of us let ourselves in for the degradation of headlines and a public wash. And so we've carried on. It is true to say that, as things are now, my wife and I have a greater respect for each other than we've ever had. When I get home I hope to find that she is as ready as I am to withdraw into the grandstand and watch youth on the court. . . . I think that's all, Willett."

And that was all, so far as actual words went. But during the departure the following morning at half past nine the gaunt and loveless lawyer heard more in expressive silences than had been told to him.

Farquhar's heavy luggage was carried across the sloping garden to the gate. There it was loaded on a motor truck to be taken down the hill into Florence. With a man at each end trunk after trunk was dramatized into a coffin by the born actors of that emotional country. They were attending the funeral of the Past, their belovèd dead.

With childish wilfulness they gave a display of their native exhibitionist complex in a manner that was frightfully disconcerting. They ranged themselves in a melancholy body on the terrace, and there were reinforced by the women servants. And when, at the last moment, Farquhar came down, pale, and with a set jaw, they burst into a sort of operatic finale of grief and farewell.

Willett broke into a sympathetic rash of gooseflesh, and hurried away.

He turned at the gate to wait for Farquhar, and at one of the upper windows of the Villa caught sight of a face that had become blurred and distorted by tears.

Not a word was said in the car.

Without once looking back Farquhar sat with his eyes shut, erect and rigid. His hands gripped his knees. Finally, voicing his thoughts aloud as though he were alone, he said, "Down the hill . . . down the hill. Compensations? In death eventually, I suppose. Meantime in one's young? I wonder."

PART II

I

Two days out from New York Farquhar sent a wireless from the *Aquitania* to his valet in Park Avenue. He gave him orders to be on the dock at the moment of the ship's arrival and to see that one of his numerous cars was there to take him away. Nothing except life-long imprisonment could force him to undergo the annoyance and irritation of the Customs examination in that dark and draughty place.

It was one of Farquhar's immensely pleasant foibles to retain the servants whom he had carefully chosen whether they were needed or not. While he was away for months at a time in various parts of the world these people had nothing to do. The ones that he used in New York stayed in New York, the ones who attended him in London remained in London. And so on in Paris and elsewhere. He pursued precisely the same plan in regard to clothes, so that he could walk in to any one of his numerous houses and find complete and separate wardrobes. He took with him from place to place the clothes that he needed for immediate use and the rest of his luggage was filled with his ever growing collection of

prints, miniatures, china, old coins, and first editions. He was a well known collector of them all.

When he had talked about compensations, hadn't he perhaps overlooked the comfort of money?

He drove to the door of his house with simply a stick in his hand. He never bothered about a latchkey. What was the use of a bell? He had built the house himself and was rather pleased with it. Three years before it was considered to be somewhat too far uptown, and, at that time, it was surrounded by numerous little shops. It was, in fact, in the center of those slum-like brown stone houses of which New York had been almost wholly composed before it had become a city forced to grow upwards in order that it might endeavour to give shelter to its ever increasing population. It now found itself dwarfted between two enormous apartment houses, for the boxlike rooms in which, standardized like everything else, people paid fantastic prices and couldn't swing a cat. It was an old house now, according to that city of unbelievable transitions. Modelled on the one of the Duc de Bercy in Paris it had distinction, of course, and the recent outburst of soft coal smoke, which had given a new complexion to New York, had made it look as though it had been built at least six years.

Farquhar turned at the door of the car to say a few words to the chauffeur. He had forgotten the man's face entirely but he remembered his name, he found.

He said, "How's your wife, Leary?"

"Fine," said Leary, flattered.

"And how's your boy? Is he still in the same job?"

The man shook his head and hunched up his shoulders.

"Why he's been in three since you got him that one!

They don't wanna work today, these young devils. All they wanna be is millionaires without doin' anythin' for it."

"So I'm told," said Farquhar.

He knew nothing about boys from personal experience. He wished to God that he did. And when the thought struck him like the point of an arrow he added to himself, "And precious little about girls."

At which he turned, mounted the steps, rang the bell, and stood in front of the beautiful ironwork screen swamped by renewed impatience and anxiety.

Jean . . . Jean. What was the matter with the girl? What the deuce was she up to?

He passed the footman, marched up the wide stairs, and made for the morning room in which he hoped to find his wife. It was twelve o'clock. She ought to be down by then.

It was a room over which he had taken great pains,—a large and beautiful room. A room which had given a severe shock to the many timid and half-educated interior decorators who had been privileged to see it on those numerous occasions when Mrs. Farquhar had thrown her house open to charitable institutions. Its walls were completely covered with old and lovely prints and its furniture was a mélange, though every piece was a gem. It showed a fearlessness that quite rattled the stereotyped ideas of those people with cubbyhole shops who are in the habit of being consulted by the new rich and believe that they do the correct thing in placing one Italian chair under one Italian mirror, and then leave the whole of the rest of a large wall utterly bare and cold.

There was apparently no one in it, although the *New*

York Times had been thrown inside out on the sofa. He couldn't touch a paper which had been treated in such a fashion. It annoyed him. It was so infernally slack.

The stump of a cigarette, still burning, sent up a thin blue spiral from an ash tray of rare marble.

"She *has* been down," he said to himself. "Or Jean has. There is no reason why Helen should have waited to see me but surely Jean might have stayed."

On his way to ring the bell to make impatient enquiries, a tall man, wearing a whimsical smile, poked his head over the back of a sofa on which he was lying full stretch.

"If I can do anything, command me," he said, and gathered himself to his feet.

It was a new voice to Farquhar. He swung round on his heel.

Who the dickens was this person? He saw a large stringless eyeglass, and a long and narrow face, a Wellingtonian nose, and a mass of thick black hair, heavily streaked with white. The voice was high, and clear, and merry, and its owner an instantly likeable person, tall, graceful, though rather eccentrically dressed. For instance, as Farquhar immediately noticed, the jacket was the sort of thing that might have been worn by Tom or Jerry at Cremorne, the collar was almost Byronic, though starched; the tie, black satin and made like a stock; the waistcoat flowered and the trousers mauve and wide.

Farquhar asked himself, with a sense of shock, where on earth Helen had found this most peculiar creature.

"If you can tell me anything about my wife or daughter I shall be grateful," he said drily.

"Oh, how are you? You're Farquhar, then." The man laughed in a winning way. Rather like an Eton boy who had been caught in somebody's orchard. "If I had been asked to describe you I should have done so with absolute accuracy, even to the spongebag tie." He came forward and held out his hand. "I'm Edmund Gamlingay, generally called Gambollingay, which is really rather good. How was the crossing over that frightful waste of waters?"

"I didn't notice," said Farquhar, though not too shortly. This man amused him just as he inevitably amused everyone. He had been born for the purpose. "I was in too much of a hurry to get here. Where's my wife, do you know?"

"Yes, I do. She's in bed. I had breakfast with her about an hour ago and read all the disasters from the papers and told her my latest plot. She's the only woman I've ever met who can listen to the plot of a novel without suggesting a new name for the heroine, a new nationality for the hero, and an utterly new twist at the end of it which ruins the blasted thing. We were up very late last night, subscribing to the New York idea. We dined at one house, danced in another, ate supper at a third, and at two o'clock this morning, charged with electricity and very bad champagne, went off to a night club, which was as hot as Hell. There we wobbled like a jelly on an overcrowded floor until the band died, when we hurried away before the men were carted to the Morgue and came home at five o'clock. An infernally amusing game which will make it necessary for *me,* at any rate, to undergo a course of electrical treatment if

I'm ever to return to my native London in anything but a stretcher."

There was a laugh in Farquhar's eyes.

So this man breakfasted with his wife. He was the latest, then. Last time he had been in that house the day's news had been read to her by a round-faced turnip-headed lad who was a cousin of the Kaiser. He said that he was selling socks in a man's shop just out of the roaring Forties.

On previous occasions he had been greeted on his return by a Georgian Prince, a Russian opera singer, a Scandinavian sculptor, an English peer who had been bought out of the Plaza, and, if his memory served him, an actor who had never acted except in private life and had the reputation of pinching women's pearls.

"Have you seen my daughter this morning?" asked Farquhar.

"Let me see. The charming Jean. No. No. I haven't. And I don't think that I saw her yesterday, either. Or the day before. Yes, I did, for a moment. She was packing, she said."

"Packing? . . . To go away?"

"That, I'm afraid, I can't tell you. But why else do people pack?"

Farquhar left the room.

All the way over on the ship he had longed to feel the arms of his daughter round his neck. In his new frame of mind she, and she only, had become the mecca of his thoughts. If, as he imagined in the way of an amateur father, his daughter had become infected with the anarchical microbes which, according to everything that he had seen and read, had made the post-war youth indif-

ferent to discipline, flippant towards the old rules of life, and bored stiff with what they called the dreary Victorian principles, he wanted beyond all things to do what he could sympathetically to deal with her case at once. After deep thought and many sleepless nights he had decided to treat this girl not in the way of a parent, or as a brother, but as an ex-Bolshevik. He might be able, perhaps, to point out the utter fallacy of the now fashionable habit which, in his perfectly orderly way, he had pursued all his life. He had come to the conclusion that he must put himself on her level and definitely eschew all moral antagonisms. A very difficult process.

He went up to his wife's quarters, knocked at the door of her boudoir and was faced by a very smart maid.

"Ask Mrs. Farquhar if she will see me," he said.

The girl was new to that house, and French. She showed no signs of surprise.

"What is the name?" she asked.

"Farquhar."

"Ah, yes! Will you not please come in?"

She was unable to suppress a smile of keen amusement.

He went in. Yet another beautiful room filled with many of the things that he had collected. He walked up and down while his name was announced. Once he shrugged his shoulders, twisted his mouth and raised his eyebrows.

He was kept waiting for a quarter of an hour.

Obviously Helen was not going to use the same make-up for her husband as she had used for Gamlingay. Finally he heard the well-known, merry voice, clear and girlish, and when the door opened there stood the woman

to whom he had been married for half a life time, the mother of his one ewe lamb, and an utter stranger to himself. A woman he admired immensely, respected, and envied a little, but didn't like in the least.

He saw that she had become definitely younger since his last visit. Her hair had been not merely bobbed but shingled as short as a boy's. It was brushed straight back and glistened with some sort of tonic or brilliantine. For the first time he saw a most intelligent forehead and a pair of shell-like ears which hitherto had been hidden. Amazingly enough this drastic treatment had not made her look in the least manly. On the contrary, it aided her overwhelming femininity and gave her a neatness and freshness which took several years off her life.

She was dressed. He was, of course, one of those husbands for whom a woman covers.

Her frock, which made no impression upon him except that it was short, was that of a girl. It might have been one of his daughter's. She was as slight as Jean. He noticed, for the first time, that the cut of her face was French. The wide-set eyes with rather heavy lids and the well-formed nose with fluttering nostrils, the rather large, fine, mouth, vivid with lipstick, gave her the exact appearance of those faces which he had seen so often in the pictures of the women who had been favourites in the Courts of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries.

She said, "Erskine! I didn't expect you so soon."

"I hurried," he said. "Where's Jean?"

"Don't we shake hands?" she asked.

"Of course, I beg your pardon. Where's Jean?"

"Then you didn't get my cable?"

"What cable?"

His eyes flicked. He had felt like that once in a hospital during the war before taking an anæsthetic.

"Did you send it to the ship?"

"Yes," she said, "to the *Majestic.*"

"But I wasn't on the *Majestic.*"

"Are you sure of that?"

"Oh, my God," he said.

"I'm sorry, but I've so many things to remember."

"What did you say?"

"I told you that Jean had sailed."

He was in a panic.

"Sailed? When and on what?"

He almost shouted these words.

"On Saturday. On the *Olympic.* You must have crossed her at sea."

II

He drew out a chair and waved his hand towards it.

But just as she was about to sit down and enter into an explanation the telephone bell rang. She shook her fist at this vile trespasser into everybody's house, threw an amused glance at her husband, and took off the receiver.

The voice belonged to one of those all too numerous and lamentable women, who, not being able to enjoy an adventitious leisure, feel it incumbent upon them to despoil the brief and peaceful moments of every one of their friends,—the sort of woman who wakes up in the morning long after every less fortunate person has been

at work for hours, puts the telephone on her chest as she lies in bed with the papers, and goes from number to number with the same daily shrill and idiotic laughter, the same stupid blithering chatter, with the same old feeble jokes and the latest nastiness about mutual acquaintances.

Marching up and down with his hands in his pockets and with blasphemy on the tip of his tongue, Farquhar listened while his wife replied in kind, saying, "No, not really," "Goodness!" "You don't say so," or "Is zat so" which was the latest slogan at the moment. "Well, well, well." It went on for a considerable time.

There was laughter all about nothing, the frequent repetition of the latest word and the latest phrase, the slavish desire to conform to the standardization of brightness,—Oh, God, that brightness,—with its eyewash of complete and unadulterated joy as though sanity were dead.

"Horrible woman," said Mrs. Farquhar. "She catches me every morning at exactly this hour."

"Why the devil don't you take your receiver off?"

"Might miss something, old dear."

A fairly equable person, as a rule, it was extraordinary how the atmosphere, the tricks, the slogans, the shibboleths, the interferences of cities got immediately on Farquhar's nerves.

"About ninety-nine percent of all this might very well be missed," he said. "If you can give me five minutes, three minutes or even two minutes I shall be obliged."

But before Helen Farquhar had approached the waiting chair, and picked up a cigarette with her long and delicate fingers, the telephone yelled again.

"I'm really sorry," she said. "You see the social secretary who generally fends me off is down with a soft coal throat and so I'm left deplorably open to everyone's attack. Probably this is a photographer who wants to take my photograph for the *Police Gazette.*"

"Why the *Police Gazette?*"

"Because it's becoming quite the thing to be raided in cabarets by the Prohibition authorities who haven't had enough to drink."

Farquhar whipped off the receiver. "Well, what is it? What? No." And held it upside down.

Helen burst out laughing. She had never seen her husband so completely English before.

"Who was it?" she asked. "Man or woman?"

"Woman," he said. "Another of these damn women, these chatter-mongers. Now look here, Helen, for God's sake concentrate for three minutes and let's get down to things. You said that you thought that I ought to come home and I am here. Well?"

The telephone rang again.

Once more Mrs. Farquhar made a gesture of resignation. Yes, it was another woman lying in bed on her back and going in steady rotation through her after-breakfast list.

Was this the sort of thing that went on every morning? Was it conceivable that a woman of some intelligence could permit herself to descend daily to the level of a monkey and chatter her time away? His thoughts went back to the Villa Pico della Mirandola, the cypress trees, the tradition, the mellow bell of the Badia di Fiesole, the exquisite cultivation, and the woman who had acquired the art of gorgeous silences.

As soon as the receiver had clicked once more in its sheath, he made for it, took it off, and stood it up on the table. It was then as useless as a man who had had his tongue cut out.

"You have a strange bravery," said Helen. "I'm afraid you're growing old."

"I should not be here at this moment if I were five years younger," he said.

With a rather mischievous smile she stood in front of him and looked up into his face, turning her own deliberately towards the window so that the cold unshaded light might do its worst.

"What do you think about me?"

He might easily have answered, "I don't want to think about you. I'm here to think about Jean."

But the amazing youngness of this woman, the apparently everlasting fountain of exhilaration with which she was possessed, the odd mixture of worldliness and naïvete, of crudity and finish, made him hesitate to hurt her. He knew that she could be wounded as easily as a pear, so he held himself in, turned on the metaphorical crank which makes the civilized man bleat nonsense, as a piano organ goes from tune to tune, and said, "My dear Helen, I think about you now what I've always thought about you."

"Yes, and what on earth is that?"

"Don't you know?"

"Of course I don't. You've never taken the trouble to say it."

"All right then, I'll say it now. I think that you're one of the most remarkable women I've ever met. If you had been born in England you would either be in

Parliament or a great star on the stage. If you had been born in Paris you would have been the leader of the intelligentsia, the thin-blooded æsthetics, perverts and epigramists of that beautiful brittle city. If you had been born in Hawaii you would have been the Ukelele Queen and the mother of a horde of brown sea urchins. But having been born in America, and spent most of your life in New York, you are Mrs. Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar, the slave of the telephone."

How well that woman laughed,—with what an undisciplined display of almost incredibly perfect teeth and a tongue as red as a rose! She laughed, and laughed, and continued to laugh, enjoying the exercise more than the cause, standing with her long thin hands with painted nails pressed against her ribs and not a hair out of place.

Luckily she was not able to hear the strange noises that were made by the telephone,—the outraged, irascible noises of a cursed machine which regarded itself as a Mussolini, an instrument not to be denied, the dictator of interferences. Trains were going by under the middle of the street.

Finally, having recovered, but not before the whole flagrant process of repowdering had been pursued, she went closer to Farquhar, and grasped the lapels of his coat.

"You very serious man. You perfect master of life. You super critic,—*damn* you."

And then with a little laugh in her voice and a flick of anger in extraordinarily gray eyes, she added, "If you'd been gifted with laughter, and the art of being thoroughly stupid from time to time, we should have been able to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our wedding to-

morrow night in mutual kindness, love and understanding."

"Tomorrow night? Is it tomorrow night? . . . Twenty-five years! My God."

"Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, I did, and I quite agree with you. I'm now in the mood to add, because I'm old, because I'm going down, because I'm going to be good, and finally because of Jean, that I would give all that I have ever done in the way of self-indulgence to be able to hold your hand tomorrow night in mutual love, kindness and understanding."

She retained her hold on his coat, and, with an expression from which all light had disappeared, looked deeply in his eyes. Here was a man in whom she was still unable to discover a single clue to his character or thoughts. He had grown a little older, become a little grayer, and was even a little more critical and fastidious, and, according to her, effete, than when she had seen him last. Better looking now, if possible; in fact, handsome. It was a hackneyed word. But he was an utter stranger, and it seemed to her more extraordinary than ever, almost more indecent, that he was the father of Jean. What a marriage! What a name for an affair which had so much better have been called a bit of banking business, the amalgamation of two unwieldly fortunates out of which, to her bitter and everlasting regret, there had not been a son.

Then, abruptly, she left him, and went to her desk; which, oddly enough, was neat, in the most apple-pie order; opened a drawer, slipped an indiarubber band

from a little bundle of letters, selected the one on top and took it to the chair which he had placed for her at the beginning of their talk. Or was it an interview?

"This is from Jean," she said.

"Oh."

Then they were coming to it at last.

"I found it on my dressing table on Friday night,—or rather at five o'clock on Saturday morning. Shall I read it or would you like to read it yourself?"

"I would rather you read it if it wouldn't trouble you much."

"Oh no, thanks. No trouble."

How frightfully polite they were.

"Darling Mumsie," she read, and as she did so the picture flashed into her mind of her charming little girl, her hardly fledged bird, who was the strangest combination of herself and the man who stood listening to her with very anxious eyes. The same short hair, the same high, fine forehead, beautiful brow, wide apart eyes, aristocratic nose with contradictory nostrils, sensitive, laughing, mouth and small, round, chin, a Grecian neck, wide shoulders, the pride and insolence of youth.

"I shall be gone when you wake up in the morning. The *Olympic* sails at 12 o'clock tonight and I'm going with it. I'm quite alone, but don't worry. Every man on board will look after me, judging from what every man on shore does, and I'm enjoying a new and delicious thrill. I've not said a word to you because whatever you might have said to me wouldn't have mattered a bit. You don't matter any longer, dear old Mumsie,—I mean in a maternal way. I've grown out of all that.

It bores me. I'm in no mood any longer to listen to 'Don'ts' and 'Do's.' Then, too, I didn't want Father to butt in. I didn't want to stand in front of him when he comes over especially to deal with me and listen to all the frowsy old things that he is bound to say. I love and adore you both, but as parents I say that you bore me. I find that I have suddenly blown open like the petals of a crocus. From now on I'm going to do just whatever I want to do at the moment that I feel like doing it. I shall probably be made to pay, but that's easy. I have found my wings and I'm flying. It's perfectly marvellous. I've only half flown before. It will be time for you and Father to come to the rescue when I get into a mess. When I do, as of course I shall, I will send you an S.O.S. I'm a female Columbus off to discover the world, to look at life through my own eyes, and find out what's worth while. To be perfectly frank, the mere thought of being married next year to Tony and becoming a responsible person before I have had my fling was all too ghastly for words. He's a nice boy and I really believe that I love him so far as I know what love means, but when I think about marriage, of yours and other peoples, and what a farce it is, I have come to the conclusion that it's the sort of thing to be put under the heading of 'Last Resources'—or perhaps 'Damages' is better. That's all, Mumsie, this time. Give my love to Father. Tell him from me that I'm sorry he has bothered to come over, and advise him to go back to the Villa Pico della Mirandola and go on as before. I put a kiss exactly in the middle of your pillow and I marked the spot with my lips,—a little red stain. Kiss it when you come home. I shall probably be fast asleep when you do, but I shall

feel it in my dreams,—my charming Mumsie, my laughing sister, my younger sister, who wants looking after very much more than I do. Jean."

III

When Farquhar turned from the window he was astonished to see that Helen, the woman who had always fled from anything serious, was crying. She was sitting bolt upright with her hands on her breast and the tears were rolling down through the thick make-up on her face.

He watched her. She was quite unconscious of his presence. She was apparently several miles away in the past, or out to sea on the wings of her spirit with the girl who, at that moment, was probably riding the mechanical horse in the gym.

Farquhar had never seen his wife in tears. He had seen her flash into angry words, stand stiff and cold with her pride flying like a banner, or lie at perfect ease and catlike grace while she threw out dart after dart of stinging sarcasm. Mostly he had seen her face alight with laughter.

He knew perfectly well that his wife adored this girl. But he wondered whether she was crying now because her pride had been wounded, because the calm and callous words of that amazing letter had bruised her like a handful of flints. After all he had heard his wife use the word "adore" in connection with dogs, furniture, actors, places, coffee and strawberries.

In any case how was he to tell of what she was thinking? It had never seemed to him to be worth while to take the trouble to understand her. She had never ap-

pealed to him. He hated women who cried. It seemed to him to be such a dirty trick; cheating, in fact, a rather vulgar form of tyranny. But somehow as he looked at this woman who, by the grace of God and face creams, had so successfully eluded time, he was moved to pity, he found.

He imagined that this was the first kick in the face that had ever been administered to her, unless, of course, she had been genuinely in love with someone when she had referred to divorce that time. He was quite in the dark about that.

He felt impelled to say or do something that was sympathetic. He wondered what, with a curious self-consciousness. It was quite likely that if he touched her she would scream and call for help. He didn't know. Or if he were to lean forward and say "I'm damn sorry," it was on the cards that she would snap out some flippant back answer in ripe Americaneze. She was frightfully up to date.

God, what *should* he do? He said to himself, "Conceive, just conceive, the hideous damn tragedy of being married to a woman of whom one knows less than any passing stranger."

And so he started to walk about. He always walked about when the working of his brain disturbed him. The strange noises of irritation and amazement on the telephone continued from time to time. But there sat that woman, disembodied, with the tears making large channels through the powder on her face. Finally he *did* say "I'm damn sorry. Helen, I tell you I'm damn sorry."

"Why?" she asked him, looking up through her clotted eye-lashes.

He had nothing to say. He was winded. Good God, that was exactly what he meant.

He continued to walk up and down. He supposed that he had blundered badly by saying that he was sorry. She had probably thought that he was glad. Being sorry implied a sort of school-boy pity. To pity Mrs. Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar was absurd. It was indeed an insult . . .

Poor swine! He felt completely helpless.

Switched back into the room by her husband's quaint remark, Helen watched him and suddenly began to laugh.

"It's funny," she said. "Yes, it is. It's funny. Tomorrow we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our wedding, although you had forgotten the fact, and at the moment when the only thing we have ever mutually produced has turned us down as flat as a pancake we don't know what the devil to say to each other. Isn't it a scream?"

"Is it?" he asked. "However, is there anything we can do?"

She picked up the letter, held it for a moment in her delicate fingers and let it flutter to the table.

"Nothing," she said, "nothing. Jean has gone beyond us. We're a couple of duds, my friend." She forgot for several minutes to renovate her face. "She doesn't even think it necessary to tell us where she's going. Why should she? We don't count."

"How about money and so forth?"

"Oh, that's all right. She writes her own cheques, you know."

Farquhar marched about in silence, while his wife, in the flagrant fashionable manner, dried her face, pow-

dered it all over with the most expert care, and used her lipstick with a cunning hand.

To Farquhar it was rather like watching an unconscious street arab bathing in a public fountain, and it didn't seem to him to be much above the level of using a toothpick in public.

Then she got up, and with more effort than she had ever made before, struggled back into her characteristic attitude of complete unseriousness.

But not before she had said to herself, "Good heavens, have I been relegated into the position of a 'dear old Mumsie'? Am I already becoming a little short in the wind? Ghastly thought!"

"Well," she said aloud, "good morning,—I've lots of things to do."

She put the receiver of the telephone back, and the bell began to ring.

It was another of those chatterwagging women, who, without the slightest grain of contrition, broke down the fourth walls of so many people's houses. Once more there was the idiotic formula. The mutual "Oh my dears," the "not reallys," the bursts of meaningless laughter, the eyewash of gaiety and brightness.

During it all Farquhar stood with his back both actually and metaphorically to the wall. How damned absurd that he should have returned "home," having given up that lovely Villa and that most charming woman to find himself in this quite abortive position. He hated to feel an ass.

There was something in his face as well as in his attitude which must have touched an odd vibration. Helen pulled up on her way to the door, gave him a look in

which there was a sort of unwilling sympathy and returned to her chair.

"Are you inclined to answer a few frank questions?"

"Yes," he said, "if you will be perfectly frank with me."

"I am always perfectly frank. I find it's the best way of hiding one's feelings. Nobody believes one when one tells the truth."

"Go ahead," he said.

"What have you done with the lady? May I ask you that?"

"Yes, I rather hoped you would." But he weighed his words very carefully. "I think the best way I can describe it is to tell you that I have retired."

"Retired!"

The word amazed her.

"Withdrawn then—being now in the veteran class."

She didn't like those words. They reflected upon herself.

"The Villa is up for sale. The servants have been paid off. The lady is going to London."

Helen found herself weighing her own words, a most unusual proceeding.

"Do you mind if I ask you if you found it rather hard?"

"No," he said. "I may tell you that it was the only thing that I have ever found hard in my life."

"Well then, why didn't you give me the tip? Divorces are easy in Paris. You could have married her."

Farquhar shook his head. "*You* have not forgotten our agreement. Why should *I?* Besides, it's far too late. I'm old. All that's over and done with. I came

back to do my job. I hoped I might be able to lend a hand with Jean."

In the sudden look that he gave his wife she saw humiliation and something far stronger than disappointment. It was the first time that she had ever in her life been permitted to peep through the keyhole of the door into his soul. In a flash she saw his anger at having been caught up by age.

"Now ask me," she said. "We have always been loyal partners in this curious firm."

In reply to which he said guardedly, "Thanks. I have no questions to ask."

"Oh, but don't you think you might begin to show a certain amount of interest in me now that we're in such a mess?"

"Well then," he said, "who's Gamlingay?"

She pretended to be pleasantly flattered. She conveyed that she had hoped that he would refer to the latest of her swains.

"He's one of the older gang of English novelists. I mean, he stands shoulder to shoulder with Wells, Galsworthy, Locke, Hichens, Benson and Arnold Bennett. The old invincibles, who remain unshaken and undamaged against the rise and fall of the Huxleys, the Kennedys, the Sheila-Kaye-Smiths, the Frankaus, the Swinnertons and all the others who throw up splashes, brilliant splashes, against their solid foundations. This is his first visit to America, where his name has been a household word for years. He hasn't come out to lecture, oddly enough, nor to advertise. In fact, he's incognito. He sneaked in under another name."

"Why did he come?"

"To bask in my sunshine, as he likes to put it. And I'm permitting him to acquire enough sunburn to make it worth his while."

"I see," he said.

The answer was given with perfect frankness and the usual glint of humour. But it didn't tell him how deeply she was involved.

"But to be as straight as you've been I may tell you that he attracts me as no other man has since I was weak enough—or human enough—to skirt round the word divorce. When was it? I forget."

"So do I," he said, and gave her a look of sympathy and respect.

"But for this trouble," she added, continuing to put her cards on the table with a scrupulous desire to play fair, "there would have been—shall I call it an episode, or have you a better word?"

"I think that does," he said. "What now?"

She shrugged her shoulders and raised her eyebrows. "I've not been in the mood for egotism since Jean flung her bomb at this house."

"I quite understand," he said.

"Nor shall I be until Jean condescends to tell us what she is going to do."

"That puts us in the same boat, then," said Farquhar, —"not that I make even the vaguest suggestion of your being in the veteran class. You look even younger than when I saw you last. I mean as to our combination to deal with this revolt. Do you really ask me to believe that we can do nothing,—nothing of any sort? Are we to let her run off alone to London or Paris and remain bewildered and perplexed?"

"Yes," she said. "There's nothing that we can do. We bore her. She's flown away from the nest. When you talk about age she's older than either of us."

Then she rose and held out her hand with a kind and charming gesture.

"It was nice of you to come home," she added. "I'm very glad to see you. Stay for a week or two."

"Thank you very much."

He bowed over her hand, and, after a slight hesitation, raised it to his lips.

IV

The wife went into her bedroom and the husband went downstairs.

Before leaving the boudoir, however, in a moment of forgetfulness, he opened the wrong door and found himself in a room of fair size which had been constructed for luggage,—the numerous innovation trunks which such a woman as Mrs. Farquhar must inevitably need. The twinkle came back into his eyes when he saw that it now contained a rowing machine, a stationary bicycle, an electric horse, and an extremely brainy German instrument which performed most of the processes of an osteopath. He had seen and used them on the *Homeric*. In fact the place had been fitted up as a gymnasium, with health balls, Indian clubs, rings, and a large mat on which to lie and kick. So that was one of the ways in which Helen kept her youth,—a most excellent way.

From force of habit he went back to the morning room. The sun came through the windows, and on its walls were

many of his favourite things. He didn't know whether to be pleased or annoyed at the fact that Gamlingay was seated at the writing table with the fingers of one hand stuck through his obstreperous hair. He was sprawled in his chair with one long leg crossed over the other and there was a look upon his Don Quixote face of the most intense concentration.

Farquhar knew his work slightly and liked it, though he was not a reader of novels. And so, with his usual thoughtfulness and consideration, he tiptoed to the sofa upon which was the *New York Times*. He gathered up the loose mass as quietly as he could and took it to his favourite perch in front of the fireplace. What a marvellous paper it was! A daily encyclopedia of the troubles and the foolishnesses, the endeavours and the humbugs of the world. When he had loaded his pipe the striking of a match brought Gamlingay back to his own dimension.

He looked over his shoulder with that irresistible smile of his and said, "Oh, hullo, how long have you been here?"

"Does it matter? I hope I didn't disturb you."

Gamlingay twisted his chair round with an air of great relief.

"I absolutely loathe writing," he said. "I'm glad to be disturbed."

"What! You loathe writing? Then why the devil do you do it?"

Gamlingay made a long arm for a cigarette, lit it, drew in a huge mouthful of smoke and swallowed it in a gulp. For the next few minutes it trickled out of his nose.

"Simply because I know no other earthly way in which I can pay my bills. And I'm a rather expensive fellow.

Then, too, to confess something to you which I've hitherto kept to myself,"—as a matter of fact it was one of his favourite remarks,—"I imagine that I have a certain duty to my public. Having created a taste I feel that I have to go on providing vast hordes of simple people with my chocolate."

Farquhar laughed. This man was going to be useful. He needed laughter.

"It isn't really true," he said, "that you couldn't do anything else. I mean a man must have some ability in order to be able to write."

Gamlingay leapt to his feet and waved his arms about.

"You're wrong," he cried, "completely. A man who writes need have no ability at all, no more than a tricky little nursery governness who knows how to keep her children quiet without spanking their soft parts. The most successful novelists are those, my dear fellow, who have the knack of collecting together a group of people of various ages, mostly females, seating them on the floor in front of a fire, putting chestnuts on the bars, and then, having turned out all the lights and drawn the curtains so that some of the noises of the streets may be dulled a little bit, says, 'Once upon a time.' He then takes them through a story in which there is very little truth, much sound sentiment, a touch or two of irony which nobody notices,—this to amuse himself,—several slabs of optimism and an immense amount of love. In other words he tells a fairy story, in which the hero and the heroine, the old people, the comics, and the tragics, live in the houses round about. He throws up bunkers here and there on the course of true love, just to prove that there must be such a thing as courage,

and uses whatever arts he has to hold the breathless interest of his listeners until the final words."

"Aren't you talking about the novels people used to write,—the authors of which are dead?"

"Of course I am," said Gamlingay. "The great successful novels, the ones that become classic and live on through the ages. The ones I write myself." He grinned. "Oh, by the way, I forgot one other ingredient. Faith."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. Faith. Or, if you don't like that word, which may strike you as old fashioned,—a belief in God. I believe it's the duty of everyone who writes, especially if it's fiction, to put into it, somehow or other, the flower of belief."

"Do you mean whether the man who writes it has got belief or not?"

"No, no, no! I'm not talking about charlatans. I'm discussing honest men. You may be surprised to hear that I don't know one,—although I confess that I don't know many,—who has not got something of God in his soul, and who therefore tries hard, though with a certain amount of self-consciousness, because the critics rip him up, to put into the hearts of his readers a little flame of hope. Does that sound queer to you?"

"Yes, it certainly does. Especially if one has been browsing on the stuff of the younger men."

Gamlingay gave a scoff that would have done credit to Grasso. "The dreadful little clever people, you mean," he said. "Oh, they don't count at all. As a matter of fact, Farquhar, and I say it with a certain pride, we old gentlemen of the pen, the octogenarians, are able to stand

firm against the onrush of ephemeral brilliance, unabashed pervertism, Freudian drivel, and epigrammatic insincerity without losing one hour's sleep. And I think that speaks damn well for the great big public."

Farquhar looked at him quickly.

"Do you include the modern girl under that heading? I mean the modern girl whose father provides her with money so that she doesn't have to work?"

Gamlingay gave that question a certain amount of thought,—with his head on one side and several of his longer eyebrows between a finger and thumb.

"Well, no," he said, "I don't. But, after all, you must remember that there are not very many of them. If I were to see one of my books in the hands of one of these exquisite insolent flappers who are older than the Sphinx I should lug my shirt out and throw it over my head."

He gave a comic wriggle and burst into a guffaw. Then, never able to stand in one position for more than several seconds, he tossed himself on to the sofa and kicked his legs about. Gambollingay. How well he lived up to that name.

Farquhar shot out an abrupt question.

"How well do you know Jean?"

"I don't know her at all, although I am one of the wise old men."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three weeks or so, I think. Though every day in New York is rather like a week."

"During that time you haven't seen anything of my daughter?"

"Seen anything of her? What do you take me for? I have seen everything of her, and felt most of it. In

other words I have danced with her for hours on your cramped and crowded floors. More than that, I have been driven out into the country by her, have played tennis with her, and attempted to play golf. I have talked and laughed, and, I was going to say, wept with her. And yet, oddly enough, I know no more about her at this moment. . . ."

"Than I do," said Farquhar. And he gave a laugh which ended in a groan. "When I saw you just now you told me that you have not seen her today and didn't know where she was. Where do you think she is?"

"I'm no good at crossword puzzles."

"She has chucked the parental roof," said Farquhar. "Rebelled, . . . I bore her and so does her mother. She's somewhere on the Atlantic."

Gamlingay shot up his head. He looked like the mad hatter who had mislaid his hat.

"Alone?" he asked.

"God only knows," said Farquhar. "The betting is that she's not."

It was then that Gamlingay gathered himself to his feet, jerked a chair in front of his probably reluctant host, straddled it, and embraced its back.

"I don't like your saying that," he said gravely. "It's not fair. It's not, if I may say so, intelligent. It shows a lamentable lack of observation on your part which surprises me."

"Why?" said Farquhar.

"Simply because it proves you to be clean off the rails about these modern babes. We elderly gents, whose feet are planted in the sands of an early Victorian past, judge our youngsters as we ourselves were judged. All wrong,

my dear fellow, all wrong, believe me! We were brought up to find everything under lock and key. We peeped through keyholes and listened at slits, sneaked out after dark when nobody was watching, and stole our knowledge of life. Don't you know yet that Jean, and all the Jeans, as well as the Jacks and Harrys who grow up with them, know more at the age of ten than we shall ever know? They don't sneak or peek or steal. They take. They have the passkey. They're agnostics long before we've made up our minds to which of the creeds we'll subscribe, and are wholly cocksure on problems that we've hardly dared to approach. And so far as the old, dull, dreary question of sex goes, which was so teasing to us, it means nothing at all to them. All they want is to dance,—pretty good exercise, too. Of course I don't suggest that they're sexless,—but what I state emphatically, certainly so far as Jean goes, is that if she had been under the necessity of not going alone to sea she would have said so to her mother without a single qualm. Her truthfulness is astounding. She's staggered me with that."

"You do me good," said Farquhar. I'm glad you're staying here."

At which there was a chortle.

"I always do good. But I don't happen to be staying here. You see, your wife is no longer a flapper and grown up people talk. They have very filthy minds. I work here. I eat here. I endeavour to make love here. But I am staying at the Plaza."

"Well, now that I'm here bring your things across. I'm rather dreadfully in the mood, Gamlingay, to be treated like one of your children round the fire. I need a fairy story."

It was at this point unfortunately, perhaps, that Helen entered in an extremely tweaky hat.

"I am sorry to break in upon your philosophizing," she said, with her mischievous smile. "But before I dash off to lunch with a gang of those of my best friends whom I cordially dislike I have to remind Edmund of his engagement to take me to tea."

With rather excessive gallantry Gamlingay raised her hand to his lips.

"I am living for that," he said, "if I can live so long without you."

"All right then, I'll fetch you at five o'clock. If you haven't any less comic garments Erskine can lend you some."

She waved her hand to both men, and went off swiftly into the New York vortex, twenty minutes late. They heard her high merry voice in the hall scattering directions to the right and left. They heard the purring of a car and the whimper of the deserted Pomeranian.

"My God, what a life," said Gamlingay. "If it were not for the gasoline which floats about this city, the tanks of every living New Yorker would be as dry as a bone."

"You're in love with my wife, it appears," said Farquhar, in a perfectly level voice.

"I am," said Gamlingay. "Desperately. I've never met anyone like her in any part of the world. Have you?"

"No," said Farquhar, "I haven't." It was mentally that he added, "And once or twice I've wished to God that I had never met her."

But the man was a gentleman.

PART III

I

AMONG the numerous pleasant weaknesses of Gamlingay's charming character was the desire to know the antecedents, if any, of his acquaintances. As soon as he met a man or woman for the first time he proceeded immediately, if interested, to find out all about them. In England this was a simple process, where there are certain well-edited volumes devoted to the history of those families who stand out either by reason of birth, wealth, achievement, or land ownership. Their ramifications are simple enough to trace. In America he found that his pleasant curiosity was more difficult to gratify. *Who's Who* and the *Social Register* are like one bite at a cherry. And it was only by putting direct questions to Farquhar that he was able to discover where he came from, to what branch of the Farquhar clan he belonged, and when his forbears emigrated to the United States.

It transpired that his host was descended from the Farquhars of Fifeshire, and that his great-great-grandfather, who had served in a Scottish regiment, had paid a visit to his youngest brother in Canada, and, while waiting in

New York for a ship to take him back, had fallen in love with an American girl whom he had married within a month. Free from the Army, and with only a small private income, it was by the dogged courage and shrewdness of Alexander Farquhar, late of Carnaustie, Fife, N. B., that the foundations of the Farquhar millions were laid. Alan, his son, born and educated in America, followed in his footsteps and so by the grace of God did Alexander, the son of Alan. Erskine's father found himself, therefore, a power in the country, and though, by this time, brains had petered out, all he had to do was to look financial, roll the snowball with the aid of clever and loyal help, and live like a fighting cock, though a very dignified one. One of his sisters married the Earl of Warmister and another Sir Victor Cleveley, Bart., with some of the Farquhar money.

He was told that the beautiful and vivid Helen was the great-great-granddaughter of that Pierre de Winton of Paris who went to New York as an art dealer, married an obscure actress but admirable woman, succeeded in his business, and, with a prophetic eye, invested his money in New York real estate. His son became a rich man and his son a millionaire. It was the former who established the firm of international bankers, the name of which, De Winton & Company, is known all over the world. It was the daughter of the latter who married the Duc de Bercy who owned the famous racing stables at Auteuil.

Here, then, was an excellent specimen of American aristocracy. And certainly the house to which he had brought his curious garments was fit for a Duke to live in, and had, in fact, in a sort of way, actually been lived in by one,—because the whole of the panelling of the hall,

the dining-room, the drawing-room, the billiard room and the library had been bought and brought over by Farquhar from the heart of Buckinghamshire.

When the title of the Duke of Missenden had fallen into abeyance the Tudor house which had belonged to that family had gone to a distant relative,—a man who had made money in Canada and returned to his native land. There he had lived for several years in perfect contentment as a bachelor, but when, finally, he had married a very determined person who was twenty years younger than himself, workmen fell upon his house and instant changes were made. His wife detested what she called frowsty houses. Wainscoting bored and depressed her and seemed absurd. She was all for hygiene and every modern convenience. She wanted a bathroom to every bedroom, central heating throughout the house, and a blaze of electric light. And so, being young and pretty, and an old man's darling, she had her way, of course. A swarm of builders fastened upon the place and put it through a drastic course of renovation.

Being a practical person she wrote to Charles of King Street, St. James's, and informed him that her very rare wainscoting was for sale to the highest bidder. A cable was sent to Farquhar in New York. He, at that moment, was about to give up the house which had been built by his father in Murray Hill and erect another in a less truck-ridden quarter, and so the price was paid. And when Gamlingay paid his first call upon Mrs. Farquhar, after having met and fallen desperately in love with her in Grosvenor Square, he found himself standing amazed in the hall of Missenden Park,—wainscoting, gallery, ceiling, and all. It took his breath away. There, too, were some

of the pictures that he had seen in the weather-beaten old house which had stood for so many years among its ancient trees at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, with a ten mile beech forest through which he had often wandered, spell-bound, into Little Missenden. To them had been added Farquhar's own collection. He had several glorious Raeburns, one lovely Gainsborough, two of Reynolds' most famous portraits, and a dozen old Dutch masters which the Galleries in Amsterdam would give their ears to possess. Among these, looking rather foolish, was a portrait by Sargent of Farquhar's father, of himself by Augustus John, and of his wife by de Lazzlo,—which made her look younger than Jean.

In the library where Gamlingay could hear the faint footfalls of the Missenden spirits and the reverberations of the old bells of the little Norman church upon whose gravestones he had so often sat in twilight meditation, there was the famous Farquhar collection of first editions, old bibles, Shakespeare folios, and half a dozen of the old masters which Duveen had bought for him. Precious and lovely, the pictures, every one of which should rightly have been hanging in the National Gallery. Here, too, there was a rug which had no earthly right to be lying on a floor, and a heterogeneous collection of old pieces of furniture which had been touched by the fingers, long since stiff and cold, of Queens and Cardinals, hunting squires, gallant royalists, Spanish Duques and the strange De Medicis.

In every other room, too, especially the dining-room, which more rightly might have been called a banqueting hall, Gamlingay saw specimens of the ancient and lovely arts and cratfs of many countries which made him salaam

to Mammon, that most powerful of the Gods. It made him raise his curious bowler, metaphorically, to the taste and discretion of his host, for whom he had already formed a liking and respect.

If he had not done so he would have been tempted, almost beyond endurance, to make him the central figure of a novel, and tell what he knew of the story of the Farquhar marriage, bringing it up to date with a rampantly vivid description of the twenty-fifth anniversary which was to be held that night. Good Lord, what a chance there was for a novelist, unbred with sympathy and a bold imagination, in the state of things into which he found himself plunged! From the little that had been said to him by this man and his wife how easy it would be to fill in the spaces, and deal with the inevitable tragedy and heartbreak of two such parents when they were faced with the sudden revolt of youth. How easy and how delicious to show the psychology of a man and a woman who had lived apart more or less for twenty-five years, utterly dissimilar, utterly out of sympathy with each other, in agreement only on one point,—and that the retention of an untarnished aristocratic reserve,—now being brought together on the downward path of age by the behaviour of their only child.

Damn it, he was sorry that he liked this man and would therefore be obliged to let him alone with his problem, his bewilderment, his Canute-like embarrassment and humiliation, and his wholly pathetic desire, much too late, perhaps, to set a better example.

As for the woman Helen, this surprising, enigmatical, woman, who had managed to retain her youthful appearance while her heart had grown as old as her husband's

passion, what could he not do with her,—with leisure, and admiration, and an expert pen? Of the girl Jean he knew jolly well that he could not deal with any truthfulness. He knew her as little as her parents did. All the same, unlike them, he believed in her, he believed in youth, he had faith in the younger generation. Probably because he was childless, a detached observer, a kindly-disposed philosopher, a mere witness of the game.

It was when he stood that morning in the middle of the library and made himself a St. Anthony to the temptation of taking instant notes for a Farquhar book that, once again, he asked himself how the devil he had escaped marriage,—or perhaps he ought to have said never been given the chance to become a married man. With his long and wiry eyebrows between his finger and thumb he wondered whether it was because he had never been able to remain still long enough properly to propose, or whether it was his perpetual undergraduatism in the way of comic clothes had made him seem unreal and not to be taken seriously by the women to whom he had attached himself from time to time.

Oh, yes, he had been in love. Often,—too often. He had been flung into a state of mental chaos by several all at once. In his middle twenties he had dodged between a lion tamer in tights,—what knees that woman had!,—and an Australian prima donna who had sung small holes through his heart. He had adored an actress for a week,—deserting her merely because she had dropped an aitch with a thud. He would have sold his soul once for a lovely English girl who was engaged to his brother. A little painful that. And last year, just before he had met the Farquhar,—he always thought of her as though

she were an historical person,—he had trailed about like a too affectionate Sealyham after a young married woman who talked the most poisonous communism while she lived in regal state, entertaining with profiteer-like opulence in the most wonderful of the palaces on the Grand Canal,—a silly little person, an advertising little person, a cheap and futile little person, but with a couple of dimples both on her cheeks and on her knees which had disturbed his sleep o' nights.

He had specialized in love. But always like a cherub. There had never hitherto been anything beneath his chin. He knew now, however, that all his thoughts of Helen Farquhar were entirely those of a man.

For the first time in his life he was really and truly hit, stirred to a desire to possess, and shaken with a fever of passion.

There was something about this woman, her cheek, her flippancy, her mental gymnastics, her intellectual arrogance, her imperturbable experimentalism, and her strange and sudden moments of sweetness and pride, which amused and frightened him, filled all the niches of his brain with satisfaction, as music does, or an almost unbearably beautiful stretch of country under the rapidly changing effects of sun and shadow. Everything that was fastidious in him, and he was really a bit of an artist, glowed with pleasure at the sight of her. The perfection of her body, her feline grace. He liked her most of all because of her curious knack of becoming disembodied at the moment of his rashest attack, and finding, when he touched her, that she had the art of becoming a shadow. He had kissed her once unexpectedly and his lips might have been pressed to a stone.

"Hard luck, Gambollingay," he said to himself, "but it serves you right, my lad."

He shot out one of his loud guffaws and waved his long arms about. All the same he was aware of a new sadness, a new loneliness, a strange and pathetic detachment, as it came to him that he was only a man with a bag, that his home was in a suitcase, that his passport and his banking account were the only things he possessed.

"No, by God, there's my pen," he said, "out of which come children, the little affectionate children of my brain. So long as there is ink, and I have life, I can build up homes in which, unseen and like a spirit, I can wander in every room. Compensation? . . . Um, I wonder."

II

Farquhar dressed early that night.

If there was anything that he hated more than another it was a party of his wife's. He detested mass humanity, the fuss and noise and insincerity of a large collection of people. He had no social gifts. To play host, to find himself surrounded by an ever increasing collection of people whom he didn't know and didn't want to know, and who didn't want to know him, irritated and bored him and made him feel a fool. He was only happy when he looked round his table at the familiar faces of not more than half a dozen friends,—men for the most part, with whom he had something in common. Those who talked his own language,—art, sport, politics; men who knew wine and tobacco and only laughed when there was something to laugh at. He had no desire to meet women except those whom he had chosen as carefully as a picture,

a book, or a print. Their age didn't matter in the least. What mattered were manners, breeding, sophistication, intellectuality, charm. They might be in the twenties, the forties, or the seventies, so long as they commanded respect and admiration and put him on his metal.

He faced an affair which seemed to him to be ironical and preposterous. The twenty-fifth anniversary of a marriage which he had described to Willett as an ideal mismarriage. He looked forward to it with horror. He knew that his wife made a fetish of parties, indulged herself in orgies, went out of her way to make collections of people and had acquired the reputation, second to none in New York, and perfectly easy anywhere if boredom doesn't hurt, as the perfect hostess.

With a strong wrench he put on the clutch of self-control, passed out of the hands of his valet, left a dressing room which was as perfect in every minute detail as an aquarium and went downstairs.

He stopped outside the door of his wife's boudoir and after a moment's hesitation opened it.

The room was as full of flowers as it would have been for a funeral. There were huge elaborate baskets, stiff and hard with flowers, the effect of which was utterly spoilt by gaudy coloured bows. There were wreaths of flowers, huge designs of flowers, so that there was not a single piece of furniture without its garish load. Devoid of imagination people had sent white lilies, and they seemed to him to be far more appropriate for the head and tail of a coffin. He expected to see huge candles burning, and looked about for the drab figures of undertakers with their expert, melancholy faces.

If he had had his way he would have given orders for

the room to be cleared at once, for a truck which should cart these unnecessary and wasted blossoms to the nearest hospital. Or, better still, to the tenement buildings in the slums about the East River, where they could be distributed among those people who only dreamt of the country.

Not with impatience, and not with resignation, but with a mixture of the two, he tapped on the bedroom door. It was opened by the maid,—the French girl, who had regarded him either as a lover or a would-be lover, certainly not as a husband.

Before she could speak his wife said, "Erskine? Good heavens, why do *you* have to knock on such a day?"

The sarcasm made him squirm. He went in all the same. He had never been there before. He felt like a man who had been hired to adjust the telephone or mend the leg of a chair. But he instantly liked the place. It was Spartan in its severity. It might have been the room of a girl in a school given up to athletics.

The bed was small and narrow, drawn into the bay of the window. The floor was polished and carpetless. There were one or two wicker armchairs such as one would have expected to see on a houseboat run by an impoverished artist. The only thing which had any claim to elaboration was the dressing table upon which there were dozens of bottles of scent. The usual impedimenta were plain and simple. More like those of a man. There wasn't a wardrobe in sight. He supposed his wife kept her clothes in her dressing room. Nor was there a picture, a book or even a magazine. It was the room in which a woman who was surrounded with too much beauty devoted herself to sleep.

A strange side of his wife's character, he thought. He had expected to see an exquisite place, feminine, sensual, soft.

Evidently just out of a bath Helen was sitting in a sort of monk's robe of white coarse stuff and her face was clean for once.

"Punctual as usual," she said.

"I hurried rather. I wanted to see you for a moment. What on earth are you going to tell all these people about Jean? Won't it seem odd to them that she's not here tonight to assist in the celebration of this touching event?"

Helen laughed. "What do you take me for? I haven't been doing this sort of thing all these years without having become a perfect master in the white lie business. If anyone asks me where she is, which I doubt, I shall say that the poor child has had to go to bed with a slight attack of laryngitis. She's broken hearted, of course. How's that?"

"Hopeless," said Farquhar.

Helen looked up with a challenging expression. Very few people dared to criticize whatever she said or did.

"Why pray?"

"For the simple and awkward reason that her name was in the paper today among those sailing on the *Olympic*. I saw it there myself."

Helen ran a comb through her hair.

"Oh," she said. "I see. Very nice of you to tell me. Well then, I shall say that her aunt is a little feeble and begged her to go to London in order to cheer her up. It will sound all the better when I say who is her aunt."

"All right," said Farquhar. "Let's say that. What we must avoid at all costs is anything on which gossip can

be based,—anything that can be used by the society scavengers on which to build up a paragraph full of gleeful filthiness."

"Exactly," said Helen. "The longer I live the more I dread publicity and the worse it seems to get. Civilization?"

She shrugged her shoulders, one of which, very white and smooth, had escaped from her bathrobe.

"How many people have you invited for tonight? Have you got a frightful crowd?"

"Perfectly frightful," she said. "Everybody. All the old standbyes, every heterogeneous title in New York and one or two new arrivals in order to give them a thrill. It's quite an event, you see. We're among the dwindling number of Americans who haven't been several times through the Divorce Court. When one meets a New York woman today, not having seen her for six months or so, it's essential to ask her two questions immediately. 'Where are you living now' and 'What is your name this time.'"

"Yes, I suppose it's come to that."

She looked up at him with a quizzical smile. "I know that I needn't be worried as to your attitude tonight. You play ball awfully well. I've always been able to say that."

She held out her hand as she would to an opera singer whose voice she was able to praise.

And as he was familiar with the ways of opera singers, having served an early apprenticeship in the entourage of one, he took it, bent over it, and raised it to his lips.

"You're learning tact," he said, and there was laughter in his eyes.

On his way to the door he drew up in front of a small

plain table on which, standing all alone, was a photograph of Jean which was new to him. It had been taken in the house,—in the morning room. It was very natural and unphotographic. It had caught her at a moment when she was half lying on the sofa in an unaccustomed repose. Her little head, astoundingly like that of her mother, was turned to the camera, and in her lovely eyes there was an expression which he had never seen before. It was wistful, dissatisfied, yearning. It seemed to him to give a clue to her sudden bolt from home. It conveyed a sort of explanation to him of her desire to search. For what? How was he to know? He ran his eyes over the body. The young, lissom, athletic body, so different from that of the girls whom he had known when he was her age. All about it there was a sort of arrested energy like that of a yacht in full sail whistling for the wind.

"By Jove," he said to himself, "what a prize for a man. Young Northrup? Will he get another chance? What in God's name is she doing, this swallow, this little bird in flight?"

Helen watched him.

Thinking himself unwatched, because, after all, he was in no way interesting to his wife, he had permitted his emotion to explain itself on his face.

"That strange man loves her," she thought. "I wonder what he's been like with his various women, and particularly with the last one to whom he seems to have been rather lengthily faithful. Rotten husbands make the best lovers, so they tell me."

"Do you like it?" she asked.

He disappeared into his shell like a far too sensitive snail.

"Yes. It's very nice. I would rather like a copy if you've got one to spare."

"Take that one," she said.

"Oh, may I? Thanks very much indeed."

He picked it up, tucked it under his arm, and went out with it.

There was a good deal of quiet bustle going on downstairs.

The butler, like the colonel of a regiment about to be inspected, was walking round the dining table with concentrated concern. It was laid for fifty people, and notwithstanding the abortive Prohibition there were the civilized number of wineglasses to each place. The decorations consisted of a miniature Italian garden with marble arches, terraces, statues, green lawns with geometrical flowerbeds. A most elaborate business which must have taken many hours to arrange. On the whole rather charming. The sort of thing that was expected of American millionaires.

Footmen went in and out. They were spoken to in undertones by the butler because the Brigadier General was present.

"Priestly."

"Sir."

"I want you to tell the orchestra to pause after their fourth selection. I telephoned to the leader this afternoon to give him a list of tunes. At the moment when you serve the champagne, and for God's sake don't ice it as you did one night in the winter, the pipers will march in. I want you to tell them to go four times round the table, disappear, have dinner, and then form up on both sides of the staircase when the ladies leave the room."

"Thank you, Sir. I have remembered the formula."

"Good."

Farquhar withdrew from the dining-room.

He was pretty certain that one or other of his wife's friends would present her during dinner with an elaborate memento of the happy occasion. Horrible ordeal. He had himself bought her that afternoon a beautiful string of pearls, costing enough to keep a fair sized hospital for a year. She didn't want them and would probably never wear them. Already she had as many pearls as would start a shop. It was the thing to do, however,—one of those damned insincere things which added to the irony of life.

He happened to find himself in the hall at the moment when young Northrup arrived. He saw the boy jump out of a taxicab and hurry up the stairs under the long awning and stand for a moment behind the iron grille near the guardian angel. Poor lad! The house was no longer paradise to him.

Farquhar held out his hand with warmth.

"My dear Tony," he said, "I'm very glad to see you. Did you come early to get a word with me?"

"Yes, Sir, I thought you wouldn't mind."

"Come into the morning room and tell me what you know."

He took it for granted that Northrup knew as much as he did about Jean's perplexing move. It was written all over the boy's face, as a matter of fact,—a nice face, with strong uneven features, a remarkably good jaw, a clean large mouth, honest eyes, thick brown hair. A fine specimen in every way. A born rowing man, six foot one and a half in bare feet. Typically and excellently American.

"How did you know about this?"

"Mrs. Farquhar called me up this morning at the office. But I had my kick in the face a couple of weeks ago. I take it you heard of that, Sir?"

"That's one of the reasons that brought me here, old boy."

Northrup remained silent for a moment staring at the floor. He looked thin and a little haggard. It was the sort of kick that made for pain and sleepless nights.

"I don't know why, but Jean sent me a letter from the ship," he said. He pulled it out of his pocket and after having looked at it with the expression of a man who was surprised to find himself alive handed it to Farquhar.

Before reading it Farquhar put his hand on the boy's shoulder, the boy he liked and trusted, the one boy whom he considered to be worthy of his daughter.

"Had you any previous inkling of her intention to turn you down?"

"No, Sir. Absolutely none."

"But my wife sent me a letter in which she said that Jean had been dodging you, from which I gathered that things had not been going well for some little time."

"That's true," said Tony. "They hadn't. I can't explain. We never had a row. I don't remember to have done anything to annoy. She hadn't found fault with me . . . I did dog her heels as closely as I could. Who wouldn't? I was always on the map asking her to dance or drive or play games. She was the only thing I ever thought about,—except my work, which, in a feeble sort of way, was wholly for her. Mind you, I'm not grumbling. I'm not suggesting that she ever did anything that hurt me. All of a sudden the moment came when she

seemed to slide away. She didn't answer the phone. She left messages saying that she was frightfully sorry, and all that, but had let herself in for other engagements. When I saw her at dances and things she smiled, put her hand on my arm and went to someone else. I cut in, and tried to get her to talk, but she just smiled and let me talk. I never knew what to say. There had been about three weeks of that, all told, before she called me one night and gave me my dismissal. Up to then I thought it was the natural reaction to too much fiancé,—or something. I had never thought of thinking that she was gone on some other fellow. She would have told me right out. That's Jean."

Farquhar listened to this perfectly honest and simple statement, spoken with a deep and wholly boyish reticence of emotion, with the most intense interest and sympathy. Like himself, the unhappy lad was puzzled and bewildered. Everybody was puzzled and bewildered,—his wife, Gamlingay, the servants, and even probably that very knowing maid. Did the letter explain?

"Dear old Tony," it ran, in rather large handwriting, as upright as herself, "I'm dashing off a few lines to tell you that, for some reason or other, just as unexplainable to myself as it is to you and Mother, I'm off to England on this ship. At least I think I'm off to England, though it's quite on the cards that I may alter my mind and land at Cherbourg and make a bee line for Paris. Don't know. Can't say. It's on the knees of the Gods,—and I think there must be Gods somewhere about this business. If not, then devils. I decided to sail two days ago and had the luck to get a cabin on the *Olympic* at the last moment because the season hasn't begun. I'm most frightfully

sorry to have had to make you suffer by my sudden somersault. Never imagine that I had anything in any corner of my mind that wasn't all in favour of you. From time to time I'll buzz you a letter. I must work something out of myself. If I knew what it was I would tell you, but I don't know, Tony dear. Sometimes I think it's . . . it's. No, I can't explain. Practice your short approaches. Try 'em off the left leg. You have been running over the green. I may come up to you one of these days,—any old day,—and ask you humbly and with contrition to take me back again. Marriage,—No, it's no good. Well, God bless you. Jean."

"What do *you* make of it, Sir?" asked Northrup, who knew the letter by heart.

"I can make nothing of it," said Farquhar. "I simply don't understand."

But the sentence that she had begun with "Marriage" sent his thoughts back to Fiesole and what he had said to Willett on the question of example.

There was an icy hand at his heart.

III

The rearguard of the celebrants departed about half past two. The usual last words were said. In the hall, all the way along the red carpet under the awning, to sulky cars. Then there was silence, and at its belated arrival Farquhar heaved an enormous sigh of relief.

He waited for Helen at the top of the stairs. There, touching her elbow with the tips of his fingers, he guided her into the morning room. He had asked young Northrup to wait.

The boy, looking tired and pale, was standing beneath a picture in which he saw a faint resemblance to Jean.

Helen was as lively and electrical as at the commencement of things. She seemed to thrive on parties and restock herself with vitality from the exuberance of her friends. There were no glaring lights in that room. She looked ridiculously young in its kindly glow. Her eyes sparkled, her teeth gleamed, and all about her there was a springiness like that of a young tennis champion eager to enter the court.

She said, "Congratulations, Erskine. You did your bit nobly tonight. Those of my intimate friends who know you so slightly were completely ravished, I saw. You could take your pick of the women."

Farquhar gave a grunt.

"God," he said.

And nothing more. But it was quite enough. In that one word he summed up the mass of irritability which had been formed by having to talk the most utter rubbish to artificial women who thought that it was un-smart to be serious or intelligent, who never listened except to what somebody else was saying at the other end of the room, and only then if it were excessively silly or vulgar, who watched his mouth when he spoke as though to discover whether his teeth were his own or had come out of a dentist's box, and went through all the preenings and wriggles which the other geese performed.

Nevertheless, the evening had been a remarkable success. The dinner had consisted mainly of everything that was out of season. The wine had been brought up from a pre-Prohibition cellar so that it could be imbibed without

the fear of sudden death, blindness, or cirrhosis of the liver. The arrival of the pipers had been welcomed with a burst of excitement. The mediævalism of this touch provided a gorgeous thrill, and it was with a sense of pride that the assembled guests thus realized that America, like Europe, had aristocracy.

There had been dancing, of course, and the only event that gave Farquhar a laugh during the whole of an evening that seemed so deplorably long, was when a woman, rising fifty or so, burst into the most lifelike imitation of an exhilarated negro with a solo exhibition of the Charleston in the middle of the floor. She hoisted her already short skirt well above her knees so that she disclosed all the intimacies, simple as they were, of her nether garments, and went through every one of the numerous and intricate gyrations of a dance which is no longer considered to be respectable by its original exponents.

It was a pathetic and an almost tragic sight.

The good lady was the centre of an admiring crowd who egged her on with handclapping, cries of encouragement, admiration and derision. It was a *tour de force* which ended in a collapse and old brandy; a display of elderly flapperism which is the keynote of today. What the Raeburns and the Reynolds ladies would have said if they had seen it is impossible to conceive, although, no doubt, they, too, had suffered in their own days from the complex of exhibition. Women change their costumes, their manners, and their tricks of phrase, but their natures remain the same.

But here they were, the host and hostess, whose twenty-fifth anniversary had been celebrated as though they had

lived in perfect love together, alone again in peace,—except for the unhappy boy who had been selected to enter the family as the husband of the little rebel about whom the white lie had been told.

"I had a talk with Tony before this orgy," said Farquhar. "I read the letter that he received from Jean, written from the ship. I asked him to be good enough to wait so that he might show it to you. It seemed to me that the three of us might get a little further out of this maze by putting our heads together. What do you think?"

The echo of jazz was still in Helen's brain. She had danced every dance and could go on dancing until the city rewoke and trains began to run again down the middle of Park Avenue,—unseen but not unheard.

"I'm glad that Tony's waited," she said. "Dear old Tony! I've hardly had a word with him all the evening. All the same, my dear Erskine, there is nothing to be done. Nothing, nothing. We're just parents, which is tantamount to saying, as Jean has told us, that we're duds."

"But won't you read the letter?"

"No, what's the use?" she said. "I know that it's only a repetition of her letter to me. To be perfectly frank I don't want to have to run the risk of lying awake all night feeling as big a fool as she thinks I am. When I'm in bed I sleep, whatever happens, and I must have nine whole hours of unconsciousness with unbroken regularity. Wars, earthquakes, fires, unhappiness, dissatisfactions, humiliations and despairs must all be blotted out during that period of time at least. I intend to fight age to the very last ditch."

She hummed the latest of the jingles, shook her shoulder, flipped her fingers, rolled her eyes, and danced about the room.

"By Jove," said Farquhar to himself, "is sleep the compensation?"

Poor swine, how persistently his mind turned now to that new word of his.

Meantime young Northrup stood by wondering why he had been kept behind. He had to be at his office at nine o'clock in the morning, where immediate concentration was vital to his job. He was in an office which dealt with stocks and shares, with their rapid changes and movements up and down, resembling those of a celluloid ball on a strong spiral of water. It seemed to him, as to the others, that consultations and discussion were useless,—a waste of time. Knowing Jean and other girls of her age and class,—democracy has its classes like any monarchy,—he, too, knew perfectly well that there was nothing to be done. Nothing. Nothing. The modern girl, especially the modern post-war girl, was a superwoman. She was a female Mussolini, a dictator. What she said went. What she did might arouse bewilderment and perplexity, but she went on doing it. She had become the ringleader of the younger generation. Boys trailed behind and fell in with her quick decisions and desires, and, while kicking against the pricks, salaamed. She was the new exponent in experimentalism, doing everything once, and, if she liked it, doing it again. Ever since he had been sixteen years of age he had had to knuckle down to the tyranny of his sister and her friends. He had been a trailer, nothing more. A lanky young male thing who had been used to dance with, drive with,

play with, pet with, and to be chucked aside. Already hardened at twenty-four, and supremely bored with girls, he had imagined that in Jean there was something different, that under her irresistible gaiety, energy and determination to have a good time there was a note of idealism. And, because of her devotion to her mother, the latent capacity to pay filial deference, strange and queer as it seemed,—and all against the standardization which affected school as well as shops, customs as well as thought.

"In spite of all this," he said aloud, "I believe in Jean. I tell you that I believe in her. She says that she must work this thing out and she will. She doesn't know what it is, I don't know what it is, and you don't know what it is. None of us will ever find out what it is until it's done. And then she'll write or cable or come back. I don't know what the word is, but I believe it's faith."

It was Gamlingay's word which, earlier in the day, had so astonished Farquhar.

The effect of this boy's statement was electrical. It made Helen drop her flippancy, fling her arms round his neck and give him kiss after kiss. It made Farquhar rejoice unexpectedly in the fact that his wife was in his own mood in spite of her glittering pretence.

And when the boy was free, though a little shaken, he put his hand on his shoulder.

"You're the second fellow who has done me good today," he said. "Good night, old boy. Cut along and get what sleep you can. I believe in you."

Northrup smiled, said "Thank you, Sir," bowed to Mrs. Farquhar and bolted out of the house. He was rather thankful when he turned into the lonely street be-

cause no one could see the workings of his face. He loved this girl. The whole of his sound and simple heart was hers.

A moment or two after he had left the room the reaction of Helen's emotion led her to cigarettes.

And when Farquhar struck a match and held it out to her, he said "I wish to God that there was any hope of our being able to make Jean less disgusted with marriage. Will you think about that?"

His wife drew in a mouthful of smoke and blew it into a ring. This she watched until it went all wobbly like a fading dream and broke. Without answering she crossed to a deep armchair, sank into it a little heavily, and put her hands on its arms. With her legs crossed and her knees displayed, she didn't look much like the mother of a girl who had taken the reins in her hand.

Farquhar waited and watched. That was a daring question of his. He wondered what she would say. Would she laugh and whip out something with a sting? Would she call him damaged goods in bitterness and anger? Or take it as he meant it with a pathetic acceptance of their mutual way down hill, himself rather far in advance?

She surprised him by what she said.

"I've been watching you tonight. I've never seen you so tolerant and nice. Nice! I ought to have said friendly, less inelastic, kinder."

He had not expected praise.

"I've been hit in the neck, you see. It's having a good effect. If I'd been hit in the face in my youth things might have been different now. One never knows."

"I daresay," she said. "You and I both come under the

heading of spoilt darlings, of course. All this comic money. Nothing to do. . . . Yes, let's have a shot at it. I don't mean for ourselves. I mean because of Jean."

"So do I," he said. "And also because,—" he hesitated for a moment in a strangely nervous way,—"life doesn't go on forever. Death's lurking about. It would be rather jolly to feel mutually certain that one of us might put a bunch of flowers on the other's grave. As it is it's likely to be pretty lonely business."

"Oddly enough I was thinking so tonight. A twenty-fifth anniversary tends to make one think." She was ashamed to confess to this. "Well then . . ."

"Well then," he echoed.

They were both rather nervous and shy. They had a lot to forget and forgive. In this approach to reconciliation, as they hoped that it might be called, there was the knowledge that their marriage had been forced on them.

The clock in the hall struck three.

"Bed, I think," said Farquhar.

"I think you're right," said his wife.

He raised her from the chair and gave her his arm. Together, without another word, they left the room, ignored the lift and walked up the noble staircase, passing under what seemed to them to be the curious eyes of men and women who had gone over, gone up and gone on, and who had had their own troubles, misunderstandings, and made their own mistakes.

They entered Helen's dressingroom together, parted with one long handshake and eyes that didn't meet.

The same name was in the hearts of both,—and that was Jean.

PART IV

I

It seemed to Gamlingay that, as day after day went by, the invisible Jean was holding the sword of Damocles over that Park Avenue house. With the instinct for drama, and the keen unclouded eye that are just as essential to a novelist as construction and technique, he found himself watching Farquhar and his wife with almost bated breath.

And all the while by loving the wife and liking the husband he was a story in himself.

Before the arrival of Farquhar, with the trouble in his eyes, he had made up his mind to storm Helen's citadel with every one of his guns. He had many batteries too. He possessed, and of course he knew it, distinction, charm, whimsicality, hunger, the cunning of words and, above all, a famous name. The combination of these, and especially the last and the biggest, was sufficiently powerful to break down the weak defences of the average woman any day of the week. They had already borne down those of the many with whom he had been mentally in love.

By throwing his plans into chaos in order to follow

Helen, he had completely ruined the yearly delight of watching the wonders of Spring in his lovely garden in the heart of the Surrey Hills. Not for years had he permitted anything to drag him away from this delicious excitement, when, whether the weather was good or bad, and it was generally bad, he had devoted all his leisure to watching the arrival of the crocus, the return of the swallow, and the determined bursting of hedges with all their little red eyes. Work and philandering, the social push in London, the arrival of his friends in the old and changing city from every part of the world, like homing pigeons, never had been able to hold him. But Helen had proved herself to be an irresistible magnet, and for the first time in the whole of his life she had made him miss the yearly sensation of rural life,—the courtship and mating of birds, the slow lengthening of the days which so gladly emerged from winter, the reawakening of those glorious English trees which stood out against the sky as living tributes to a courageous country,—the proofs of heredity, of tradition, of pride, and of the survival of the fittest,—the yearly tragic scene of the devoted hen who, having brought to life a brood of ducklings, screamed in horror and fright on the edge of a weedy pond when they took to the water with quacks of glee.

Farquhar had ruined the attack. This man with his curious reserve was decent. He played cricket. His friendship and fairness made it impossible for Gamlingay to cheat. Then, too, he was moved to deep sympathy as much by what he saw under the surface as by the little that he was told of the parental disappointment and despair, perplexity and bewilderment which Farquhar was undergoing.

The worst of it was that, in spite of the fact that when he had kissed Helen and found her marble, poured out his love with eloquence and earned her laughter, there had been indications—by looks, by an occasional lingering touch, and by a sometimes regretful retreat—to make him believe that if he had pressed forward with all his reserves he might have carried the barbed wire entanglements behind which she had cunningly placed herself.

When in her car the night before Farquhar's arrival she had said "Don't," and drawn herself away, there had been a contradictory invitation in her voice which had sent the blood to his brain.

That very night, too, when he had withdrawn his tanks and all his guns after that talk with the grave-eyed Farquhar, she had let him see, as never before,—by a gesture, by a broken sentence, by a sigh,—that he had made his mark on her heart.

And so he greatly resented Jean. The armistice was her achievement, at the bottom of it all. Nothing was plainer than that she, and only she, had brought about the arrested development of his fiery plan, and those of his host, and Helen. All three were afloat in the same boat, drifting and impotent, waiting to receive from Miss Mussolini a gracious and patronizing chit which would give some indication of what she was suffering from.

Outwardly it seemed as though nothing had happened. Helen went as usual into the vortex and duly came out again. She laughed and danced, went from party to party, from opera to concert, from dinner to supper, and wore her usual expression of ironic enjoyment. When in New York do as New York does, was her motto, and she did it to the hilt.

Farquhar spent aimless hours with his books, standing with his back to the fireplace with an empty pipe in his teeth, thinking backwards and forwards and round in circles—not of himself, but of Jean.

And in self-defence and anger Gamlingay shut himself up in the sitting room and lived with his characters.

In what way, and how soon, would the sword fall? Wealth and the wonders of wireless could do nothing in this case. On went that house and its routine, the roar of the city and the strange events of the world. But these three people, father, mother, and lover, were prisoners of hope.

Finally came a cable addressed to Helen. And in this Jean was affable enough to announce that she was with Aunt Anastasia. Love.

In the course of posts, days later, a letter arrived bearing an English stamp. This also was addressed to Helen. Farquhar carried it to the breakfast table which he shared with Gamlingay. He knew the handwriting, so upright and round, though Jean had been an infrequent correspondent on her way up the ladder of life. He would have given his ears to open it, to have received it.

He kept his eyes on it throughout the meal, and wished to God that Helen had gone to bed reasonably early, instead of at four in the morning, so that, without inconsideration, he might have taken it up to her room.

Being unable, eventually, to bear the appalling strain, Gamlingay said: "Open it, why don't you. Damn it, you're a partner in this deal."

And Farquhar was sorely tempted. The handle of a butter knife itched in his eager hand.

But he said, "No. There may be things between Jean

and her mother that I ought not to know. They've always been together while I've been mostly away."

"Oh, yes. Well. Excuse me, will you? I'll buzz off to my room. Farquhar, this thing's getting on my nerves, I may tell you. Dash it, I'm beginning to feel almost as much her father as you are, man."

"Well. That's not saying much. You're a dirty dog to desert me."

But Gamlingay sprang to his feet, pounded three times round the table in that enormous room and collided on his way out with a footman, who received his bursts of curses with an open mouth.

Having made a habit of controlling himself as a matter of form and caste Farquhar remained at the table though he let his coffee grow cold. He balanced the morning paper against the most convenient thing and read it with grim determination from the front page to the last. The name of Caillaux was in headlines and so was that of Cook. He saw that the franc had fallen again, that the number of unemployed in England had risen, that the British coal owners had refused to meet the miners' representatives, and that Mr. Baldwin was being persuaded to avert the trouble in May by granting another subsidy which must come out of the leaner and leaner pockets of the men who worked without striking,—the long-suffering, honest, men. Everywhere disturbance, unrest, danger, the feeble and almost dishonest utterances of the world's politicians, the stultification of republics, the epidemic of feeble dictators, the unsporting rivalry in sports. What a mess! What a farrago of chaos. What an amazing exhibition of racial jealousy and hatred and the frightful lack of faith. . . .

Farquhar had two new words. He had added faith to compensation and groped for the meaning of both.

At last he went into the morning room, taking the letter with him. He marched up and down like a caged animal, a llama, perhaps, for choice. A poor beast who should be in the open, free, with elbow room. And it was not until half past eleven that Helen put in an appearance, actually as fresh as paint. Had she managed to sleep through wars and riots and earthquakes as she said she did? There was a small suspicious line on her forehead, it seemed to him.

"No wonder you have such an admirable waist," she said. "I believe you take as much exercise as I do. I've rowed my boat for two miles this morning, galloped my mechanical horse several times round the park and pedalled a bicycle into the village and back without getting off at the hills."

He pointed to the letter which he had placed against the face of the clock.

Her eyes flicked. And without the slightest camouflage she permitted herself to gasp.

"From Jean?" she asked eagerly, though with a strange hesitation she held her place at the door.

"From Jean."

"Why didn't you open it?"

"Because it's addressed to you."

"Sir Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar," she said, with a break in her voice, "a very white knight indeed."

She bowed quite gravely, though he suspected her of sarcasm, and then made a rush for the letter.

"I'll read it aloud," she said, breaking it open.

"No, look it over first."

Good heavens, this man was fair. A really most excellent sportsman. It was a thousand pities that they had been brought together like royalty instead of simple souls. There might have been a son.

Very deliberately she started to read the long-expected letter without the slightest censorship.

DEAR LITTLE MUMSIE.

You will have had my cable announcing that I have turned up like an accidental pigeon, not a carrier, in Eaton Square. By a stroke of luck I remembered to send Aunt Anastasia a wireless from the ship. Rather brainy, I think. If I hadn't there wouldn't have been a room in the house. My cousins seem to regard it as a kind of cheap hotel and bring their friends in shoals.

I don't know why I'm here. I don't know anything about anything, least of all myself. But here I am and have been for several amusing days. Same old life, same old people, and precisely the same old jazz. But not *the* life or *the* person, whom I begin to think is a man. Aunt Anastasia gobbled like a turkey when I found her at afternoon tea and my numerous cousins received me as though I lived next door. None of them shook hands. They nodded with frozen faces and carried on. They were having a bloodless battle over the Sitwell tosh. And when Uncle, standing with his legs apart in front of the fireplace,—the usual English perch,—gave out gloomy warnings of impending revolution and national disaster as he always does, they paid no more attention than if he had been talking over the radio on how to tar the roads.

There were one or two young things there whose faces were entirely new and as Aunt is a precipitate woman I didn't know whether I ought to treat them as cousins

or not. She might so easily have added to the population since I saw her a few months ago.

For all Uncle's talk about being broke and ready for the dole, the house has three huge cars, an army of servants and food all over the place. There are tea and biscuits before breakfast,—though the boys have a glass of champagne,—more tea and biscuits at eleven o'clock, after a breakfast of baked meats, and the sort of lunch that we had at Oxford when we went to see Bill last year. Then there is the regular tea with muffins and crumpets, shrimps, watercress and gorgeously gooey toast.

Then dinner, a rite, an affair, a function, at which, every night, so far, uncle has delivered himself, quite unnoticed, of a bitter lecture on the decay of the manners of the younger generation, because they smoke before port. He is the only person who has lectured me about coming away alone,—poor old despised and ridiculed person who is dismissed by his family as a die-hard, a dinotherium, long ago extinct.

At first he didn't seem to realize that I was not surrounded, as usual, by a maid, a dragon, and you. When this dawned upon him, some hours after my arrival, he came up to me in the drawing-room, put his hand on my shoulder and looked at me with consternation and fright. "My dear," he said, "am I to understand that you have made that long and dangerous crossing wholly unattended?" I said "Of course. Why not? My cousins think nothing of going about alone, dashing off for week-ends with the bright young people. Why shouldn't I cross in one of the sea Hotels?" He groaned and threw up his hands. "Don't talk to me about my children," he said. "They're nothing but lunatics. They are all as mad as hatters. They are wild and uncontrollable. I could get more obedience and discipline from a sheep-dog than from any one of them. I sometimes wish I were dead."

His voice trembled and his eyes filled with tears. He looked rather pathetic. It was no good arguing. He's lived beyond his time. He ought to have slipped away in the days of stage coaches and feudalism. I let it go at that.

I went to a concert this afternoon at that crumbling old building near Regent Street. It was crammed to the ceiling with women. The pianist might have stepped out of one of those gorgeous pictures in the Pitti Palace. I have never seen such a face nor have I ever heard such playing, such clarity of tone, such electrical technique or such intense and poetic feeling. No wonder all the women round me made funny little noises like birds disturbed by a storm. I did, had to, I couldn't help myself.

I can almost hear you laugh from here when I say that he did something to my soul. He didn't pay the slightest attention to his audience, and didn't seem to know that anyone was listening, or care a hang. As soon as he began to play he went out of this world and into another. He seemed to hang between heaven and earth and to have been specially chosen as an instrument for the interpretation of the work of those composers who had passed over into what Conan Doyle called, that night when we heard him lecture, another plane. I didn't know whether I was on my head or my heels when I went into the street, and for the first time in my life I couldn't go to sleep.

I believe that it's the first serious thing that has ever happened to me. I am not suggesting that this revolution was caused by the man himself,—I mean as a man,—but that it was the result of the sounds he made, those waves of melody. At school we used to make what we called jokes about the remarks of a visiting lecturer, far above our heads, on the question of vibration. For the first time I understood something of what he meant. Every note that was struck on the piano came on a direct line to the innermost part of me,

went right through my hardened little skin, sent a thousand questions flying like a great flight of pigeons, uncertain where to go.

It was perfectly hopeless to attempt to sleep or even to lie down. I spent the whole night walking about my bedroom on the tips of my toes. I was just as much filled with echoes as the air after a peal of bells. When that man plays again and I hear him, and you may bet your life I shall, I shall probably be able to tell you what's the matter with me.

Because something *is* the matter, Mumsie, very much the matter, and as I keep on saying I don't know what it is. Cousin Sibyl went with me to that concert and although she doesn't know the difference between "God Save the King" and "Yankeedoodle" she was shattered, hypnotized,—so much so that she forgot to light a cigarette as she drove her car through London. It wasn't until late in the evening,—in fact after the combined assault of the family upon Uncle and his institutions,—that she became normal again. It was then that she called the pianist a charlatan, the Coué of music, and went off to the Café de Paris to dance with her little gang.

I didn't go. Somehow it seemed to me that jazz was blasphemy after what I had heard that day. I stayed behind to think. Think! That's a queer word for me! Lying on the sofa in the drawing-room I heard my uncle talking through a sort of mist. He was a prophet of gloom. He talked about standing on the edge of a precipice, of a revolution, of dying industries, anarchy, strikes, the sucking of his blood by taxation, the pitiless extraction of English money by the people in Washington.

Aunt Anastasia was cross-stitching during this harangue. She seemed to be like a comfortable hen who persists in laying eggs and going on with her duty in spite of droughts or rain. At the end of it I heard her say, "I think you're wrong, my

dear. Read Pepys, and you will see that precisely the same conditions existed in the reign of Charles II, or whoever was king at that time. Cheer up, and don't fret yourself to fiddlestrings by the movement of the world. I'm not going to. I've got far too much to do." Then she rose and rustled her feathers, wobbled across to the piano and played "Tommy, make room for your uncle" which she sang the whole way through.

Uncle endured it until the bitter end, being a good old sport, then threw his cigar into the fire, said "My God" and left the room. He probably went to the library, wrote a letter to the *Morning Post* and doped himself with whisky before groping his way to bed. A queer thing life. I wonder why we're born. Good night, my beautiful Mumsie. Look out for Gamlingay.

"JEAN."

"P. S. I can't ask you to kiss father for me. It would disturb the set of his hair. So I shall put one for him in this although I feel that it's rather like my kissing a man at a party who didn't catch my name."

There was a very long moment of silence, during which the rhythm of New York, that hard, staccato rhythm, vibrated through the city. Then Farquhar spoke, and his voice was flat and dull.

He said "You might have skipped the postscript."

"Yes," said Helen, "I'm sorry. But I suppose it's perfectly natural that chickens come home to roost."

II

Farquhar went up to his dressingroom. It was his intention at that moment to give orders to his valet to

bring out the necessary bags for a trans-Atlantic crossing. He was in the mood to get on the telephone immediately, much as he hated the thing, to ring up the office of the White Star Line and find out which of their ships was sailing at the end of the week.

He was resentful as well as uneasy. It seemed to him to be damned stupid to have burnt his boats to no purpose, to have chucked happiness and beauty and found that all his good intentions were pieces of straw. He was angry at the tyranny of youth, its astounding thoughtlessness, its complete and unashamed egoism. He had been frightfully stung by that postscript and the place smarted like the devil. Was it his fault that his marriage had been made a loveless business, that he had been compelled to go forth in search of joy? The irony of the whole thing lay in the fact that he and Helen, in their youth, had been obedient to the wishes of their parents. If they had been imbued with even a small percentage of the intolerance of Jean she never would have been able to write such a line to her mother as the one which hurt him now. She never would have been born.

It might not be too late to go to Lillian Shepreth and say "To hell with being good, to hell with increasing years and responsibilities, to hell with conscience and young life. Take me back again." But would she? That was the point.

He had arrived at that sad period of a man's life when passion was burned out, love a friendly detachment, a mere companionship. In his bitterness he wasn't sure that Lillian, with all her ambitions and starved maternal instincts now given up to that boy, could do with him again. That boy had all her thoughts.

But, at least, he might head at once for London, join on with Jean, do his best with patience to discover what young pain it was from which she was suffering, and, unless she treated him with contempt, lend a helping hand. The agony, the irritability, the impotence of waiting for her decision, for her own discovery, was more than he could bear. It was appalling to be obliged, willy nilly, to find himself day after day under the same roof as the woman whom he had deliberately avoided for twenty-five years if no purpose could be served.

This feeble, anæmic attempt at reconciliation,—what did it mean? Where could it lead except to a series of mutual hidings behind hedges of regret? He had given up Lillian, but Helen had never said that she intended to retire form the affair with Gamlingay. Nor did she appear to realize that although it was impossible to duplicate their own case and force Jean into a convenient marriage, it was vitally important to be at hand to guide and encourage her into marrying Northrup or an equally desirable lad. The future of the family was entirely in her hands.

He felt like a Brigadier General who, in the midst of war, had had his command taken away by a cursed politician. Or worse, perhaps, than that. Like a man whose luxurious private train had been signalled off the main line and shunted into a siding.

But he came to no conclusion. All his lines of thought ran into blind alleys. He wound up an hour of indecision by saying "Damn, damn, damn."

If he could have been seen then by those people who had always accused him of living for himself what a yell of laughter he would have provided them with!

Helen had gone out. Her list was as full as ever. An hour of music at the Plaza arranged by de Segurola, a lunch with twenty women, bridge, a thé dansant. Not even Jean had been able to put a drag on her wheel. She was running round and round after her tail in her astonishing way,—her most foolish and wasteful way.

He wished to God that *he* had something to do. As it was he had nothing to do and nowhere to go. He belonged to numerous clubs, but he was hardly known to their members. He had been in Europe so much. Other men were working. All he could do was to say "Horse, horse, play with me" to those who had neither the time nor the disposition to join him in a game. It was absurd. And so, after having kicked things in his dressingroom, he chucked it and wandered about aimlessly from room to room. He was out of taste with all his treasures, and longed poignantly for the only one that ever had really mattered,—Lillian,—far away.

But just as he had taken his stand in front of the fireplace in the morningroom, of which he was completely fed up, Gamlingay came in.

He was not gambolling and gay at that moment. Far from it. His nice face wore an expression of melancholy and dejection. His comic double tie was without its usual pin. He was untidy. His thick black hair with streaks of gray showed the marks of restless fingers. He slouched in, shot a glance at his host, and, having nothing to say, turned his back and crossed to one of the windows. The line of apartment houses opposite no longer seemed amusing by their fantastic height. They were, on the contrary, full of menace. They bore down upon his spirit. He resented the way in which they

cut off the light and interfered with the sky. The green patch down the middle of the street reminded him, though only faintly, of all that he was missing. What an ass he had been to leave his garden, his trees, his dog, his chickens, his view of Hindhead, his rambler roses, and the swallows that scooted round the ancient gables of his house.

Finally he wheeled about.

"I say," he said, "I'm lonely."

"So am I," said Farquhar.

"Are you? Oh. Well, that improves the state of things and makes one feel better. It's always rather cheering to meet a man who's suffering from the same disease."

"Think so?"

"Sure of it." He was distinctly more cheerful. "It's jolly to talk about mutual symptoms, especially if they're nerves. Which bell do you ring for cocktails? It's never too early to drink."

Feeling better too Farquhar put his finger on the only bell there was and gave orders to the footman for half a dozen Martinis. They could easily drink three apiece.

"That's the notion," said Gamlingay. "Let's drown our disappointments in alcohol, and presently, when we feel smoothed out and friendly, go forth arm in arm and eat. Let's see if we can't dig up a place in which the chef's a genius. I've always found that mental disturbances are greatly smoothed by catering to one's tummy."

"I'm not an expert in mental disturbances," said Farquhar, "though I'm going to be I can see."

They said no more until the drinks came. They touched glasses twice in quick succession. Whereupon

Gamlingay was sufficiently convalescent to start a cigarette.

"How old are you?" asked Farquhar, slowing loading a pipe.

"Forty-five."

"Um. The dangerous age."

"Every age is the dangerous age. There's no period in the life of a man or a woman which is in any way safe. Why should there be? That's life. I wouldn't be without a sense of uncertainty for anything you could pay me. I love to feel that every time I round a corner I may fall into a pit. Scrambling out is good exercise and nursing wounds a most magnificent training."

"Training for what?"

"For the next pit."

"It all depends what you believe in. What your Ism is."

"Personally, I am absolutely convinced that life is merely an apprenticeship to several other lives."

"Bosh," said Farquhar.

"Nonsense,—nothing dies. Everything has changes of life, that's all. I mean a series of deaths. There are several places in front of us. Life is only the first. I am not at all sure that the second isn't the hardest of all. I am rather afraid that when we die, as we call it, and go to Number Two, the pain of being earthbound will be worse than any we've known down here."

He looked up to see if Farquhar was interested, and finding that he was,—that he was eyeing him with a curious intensity,—went on.

"If I were to go tonight, for instance,—and after these two able cocktails I very much hope I shan't,—I'm abso-

lutely certain that I should want most frightfully to see your wife again. I shouldn't be able to dig her out of my heart. I should long to come back and touch her hand, open the door of her car, hear her laughter, watch the gleam of her teeth, and, if possible, help her from time to time over the stony places. And if ever she were to weep at my having gone, how frightful to be powerless to assure her that every tear makes a wound. . . . How about that for an apprenticeship to another series of climbs? However, there are bound to be compensations. There always are."

Farquhar moved a step or two nearer to Gamlingay's chair. This man was using *his* word. "How?" he asked.

"In the way of work, I think. Because, of course, we go on working. I haven't a doubt about that. And I'm quite sure that we improve in our jobs. To take my case, I shall be able to write a damn sight better, see things more clearly, have wider sympathies, a better style, more philosophy and truth. How long it will be before one dies again in order to make the next grade I haven't the remotest idea. A bit longer than is allotted to us, I expect, on this sometimes happy plane. I greatly hope that the air will be freer of carbon monoxide, among other things, and that there won't be telephones.—Here's luck!"

He sipped the last of his glasses. A pre-Prohibition cellar put a new complexion on things.

Farquhar was thinking while he twisted his moustache.

"You're pretty cocksure about all this. Tell me. Do we fall in love on your planes?"

"Well, rather! There's no life without love, old boy."

"I see. But. . . . How about God?"

Gamlingay flung up his hand.

"Ah yes, how about God? . . . That there is a God goes without saying. I see Him in my garden, and in everything that grows. I have something of Him in me, and whenever I remember it am devoid of fear. . . . There's too much God on earth. Every creed has a God. Every old and new religion is made up of a different God,—and God himself is lost. But the beginning of Life—*the* Life—will be at the feet of God, and it's a jolly long way off. Up and over, on and on, death after death. Finally, earthbound no longer,—unselfish, tolerant, child-like, humble at last,—then God."

After which there was a considerable silence.

With his legs struck out, wearing a queer little smile, Gamlingay continued to smoke. And though Farquhar, standing in front of the fireplace, was not in the least convinced, he envied this man's convictions and was jealous of his faith. He, himself, was in the dark, without any ideas or hope. He had no one, Divine or human, with whom to share the troubles that he had stacked upon his shoulders in his feeble attempt to be good. His money, his reputation, his traditions, the future of his name, his wife who was loved by another man, his only child who had cut loose,—they made up his loads in these days and he was unaccustomed to loads. He had travelled lightly. If he were to die that night he would remain the most earthbound pilgrim among all the passing crowd. His thoughts would be anchored to earth,—divided between Jean and her trouble, and the woman who ought to have been his wife, and the boy his son.

"Well," said Gamlingay presently. "How about it?"

"How about what?" asked Farquhar.

"Food, my dear fellow, food."

"Oh, I see. I thought you wanted my views,—although I've none to offer." He held out his arm.

Funny if he should discover what was meant by compensation from the man who loved his wife.

III

Farquhar waited for Helen to come in that evening. He was always waiting. She was late. She was always late. She was dining out at eight o'clock. She had ten minutes in which to dress.

She found him playing sentinel at the top of the stairs.

Odd creature. So amazingly one-eyed. A rather trying lover if he had always behaved like this. Why on earth didn't he unbend, relax a little, go out and enjoy himself?

She nodded and waved her hand. It was precisely what she would have done if he had been a friend who had been calling on her husband, if there had been such a man in her life.

"I'm afraid you'll have to hurry," he said, instantly expecting a jibe.

At which she laughed at him.

"No, no, I never hurry, though I'm always on the rush. I shall be late, but that's nothing. Everybody's late. Only provincials are punctual in New York. The person who keeps a hostess waiting the longest is the one who earns her most profound respect."

"I see. Er . . . I want a word with you, if that's possible."

"Any suggestions for fun?"

"Not at the moment," he said.

"Then let's put it off until tomorrow. Always put off till tomorrow what you don't want to do today."

"I've been doing that rather too long."

"Because you happen to be a convert you needn't become a fanatic."

"One always does," he said.

A shadow passed over her face.

"It's Jean," she said, with a note of anger in her voice. "Jean, Jean! Can't you talk about somebody else for a change? About yourself or me? You may be astonished to hear it but I'm sick of the sound of her name."

"I am a little astonished," he said drily. "Was I wool-gathering when I heard you say that you adore her?"

He chose to forget that the word came loosely from modern lips.

She went into the lift.

"Are you coming?"

"No, I don't think so. What's the use? I can't go into your bedroom while you dress, and even if I could you're not in a mood to give me your attention."

"I may change my mind upstairs!" And she put her hand on his arm.

And so he went up, and opened the door of the boudoir, and watched her with unwilling admiration as she sauntered towards her room. She might have had an hour in which to dress. She was very graceful, very attractive, and how well she wore her things. He paid her an inward tribute for not being covered with diamonds and bracelets and baubles, like a Zulu woman, or one who was

advertising her husband and the amount of money he made.

"If you give the thing a moment's thought," she said, defending her irritation, "you'll understand my mood. All the way along I've been a pretty good mother to Jean, I mean so far as a woman can be a good mother who is in society. At any rate, there hasn't been a single day since I brought her into the world during which I haven't given her every moment of my leisure. Here and everywhere. You don't know this, because you've been looking after yourself. But I give you my word, and that's enough, that I've loved this child dearly and brought her up by hand."

Her voice broke and she turned her face away.

"I know," he said. "I know."

She snapped round upon him as though he had not agreed. She, too, had been stung by Jean's letter,—by both her letters, and by her desertion.

"A nice thing," she said, "at this stage of the game to be treated like a poor old woman with one foot in the grave,—calmly and insolently to be told that one is a sort of relic of early Victoria times. I'm *not* old, if you are. I have lots of life in me still. Don't imagine that I'm going to waste a moment of it on this ungrateful child."

"I see," he said. "Well then, I'll push off."

He understood. Jean's treatment had been abominable, alarming, almost beyond belief. But there was nothing to be done. He started to move to the door.

But she said, "No, stay here. If you draw a chair up near my bedroom door you can talk to me while I change."

"Oh, thanks," he said, with a laugh in his eyes. "That's kind. But shall we be able to say much that matters with your maid taking everything in?"

"Well, how about speaking German? Are you capable of that?"

"Hardly," he said. "Not German. How are you in Italian?"

"Oh yes, I forgot. Italian's your language, isn't it? No doubt you became pretty fluent by saying gallant things to your lady."

And having thrown that shaft she went into her room.

"You missed the putt," he said. "The lady and I spoke English."

He heard a laugh. He heard directions given. He suspected that everything had been ready for the necessary change. The maid must be well accustomed to his wife's last-minute returns. What a pity that Gamlingay could not catch him sitting behind the partially open door of his wife's bedroom about to discuss grave family matters in a language unknown to her maid. A damned good chance for a writing man.

Helen said in Italian what was equivalent to "shoot."

And he shot, in what she had called "his language." He spoke better Italian than she did, for a wonder. He remembered that she had an ear so quick to catch intonations and phrases that after a few weeks in any country she was able to talk the daily argot of any of its people.

"I've been thinking over Jean's letter," he said. "The last one. There's a line in that in which I believe there's a clue. 'I begin to think it's a man.' Did you notice it?"

"Yes," she said, "I did."

And in spite of her declaration of an absolute lack of concern her voice went high and sharp. Evidently he had touched the maternal chord.

"This pianist fellow. Who do you suppose he is? I've been hunting through the files of the *London Times* at the Club this afternoon but, good God, there are dozens of 'em. Concert announcements cover half a page. She writes about music in a queer way for a kid."

"A kid?"

There was no need to be in her room to feel the sting of her sarcasm.

"A man and music," he went on. "It's a pretty bad combination for a young girl in Jean's present state. I don't agree with Gamlingay about the modern generation. Do you? I mean as to being sexless?"

"Yes and no," said his wife. "But honestly I can't possibly pose as an expert. How do I know what goes on when these children are out of sight? In public—bathing, dancing, driving, playing games,—they pose as belonging to one sex,—the intermediate sex. But when they're alone . . ."

"Um, that's it." And after a moment's pause, he added, "I'm certain that Jean has suddenly discovered to which sex she belongs. It isn't her funk of marriage that has taken her away. It's what she says it is,—a man. In other words it's love. That's what she's after, I'm afraid."

"Well, it had to come."

"True enough. It's the only thing that counts." He might have added "it's compensation" if his brain had been working normally. "But what makes me sleepless," he said, "is what it may mean to us."

"Us? How?"

"No son. Jean must carry on. Her marriage is more important to us than ours was to our united parents. Have you conceived the possibility of Jean's falling in love with a bounder, a cursed adventurer with a handsome face and an empty pocket, who will live on her money and rot about and lay everything to waste?"

"Yes, but Jean's a most sensible girl."

"No girl's sensible who's looking for love and is not considering marriage."

"But, good heavens, you don't think, do you, that Jean is likely to live with a man without her marriage lines?"

"Have you never heard of example? She may have inherited my carelessness,"—and he might, if he had not been Farquhar, have added "and yours."

"If I had followed my inclination this morning I should have booked passage on any boat sailing on Saturday. We, as Farquhars, are in danger. She, as a poor groping kid, is in danger. All this cursed money of ours is a danger. What do you think? Shall I sail?"

He waited for her answer. Waiting had become a habit. He heard her move about her room with quick steps. A clock struck eight. It was the moment when she should have been entering the house of her hostess according to the rules of courtesy, if there are any such rules today. He heard irritable words in French. He heard the squirting of scent from an atomizer.

At least ten minutes went by.

Finally Helen emerged. She wore a frock that was the colour of forget-me-nots, perfectly plain and simple, and the more expensive for that. Her shoes and stockings

were blue and there was a sapphire on her breast. Her face had been repainted with a most artistic hand. She wore no other jewels than a narrow collar of diamonds on a throat as beautiful and nearly as young as Jean's.

He rose, bowed, and said, "Congratulations. I'd like to be going with you for the delight of being seen in your company."

But instead of showing her teeth with pleasure, those beautiful teeth of hers, she turned away. She put her hands on her breast and closed her eyes. There were other diamonds on her eyelashes which were far more valuable.

"You haven't answered my question."

She looked him full in the face.

"I think you had better stay."

"Why?"

She opened one of her hands with all its fingers outstretched.

"It might be wise," she said.

But would his presence in that house mean anything if, determined to use every moment of her life, she chose to pick up her affair with Gamlingay where Jean had broken it off? She had lots of life in her yet.

"If you think that I can be of any use I shall be glad to stay," he said. "I have nowhere else to go."

She went up to him with a sudden friendliness, almost a suggestion of yearning as though it were on her tongue to say something sympathetic and in harmony with his suggestion that they endeavour to pull together. A curious shyness seized her and she began to fiddle with one of his buttons.

"You and I count in this scheme," she said, "in spite

of Jean's disloyalty and comtempt. I'm not going to spoil my sleep. Don't you. Let her go. Let her find out what it is that she wants. She wants it and whatever it is she'll get it. You know that. Don't worry. If she were here and under our noses it would be just the same. Kicking against the pricks is frightfully bad for shoes."

But he had come all that way to worry. He had burned his boats in order that he might concentrate on worry. He had accepted the fact that the time had come when to worry was next in the line of his chart, with love, sport, irresponsibility, paternal slackness, mañana, all scratched out. He was, therefore, too much worried to realize that she had raised her face to him and was willing to be kissed. And even if he had not been worried he would never have conceived the possibility of receiving such an invitation from a woman of Helen's pride, after twenty-four years of absences and detachments, both of body and spirit.

"That's not my idea," he said. "You and I don't count just now. Jean does. It's Jean's day. We're asked to tackle the Jean problem."

He didn't notice that she drew her hand away as though it had been stung. He imagined, poor swine, that she left the room so suddenly because she was frightfully late.

It would have taken a man with more knowledge of women to have guessed the words that were on her lips as she sat back in her car.

"Io son io", she cried out, continuing to speak his language. "I have counted and I'll continue to count in spite of family, reputation, dislike, and a young girl's grasping needs."

And she told the man who closed the door to deliver a message to Edmund Gamlingay. "Ask him to call for me without fail at No. 2 East 69th Street at eleven o'clock tonight."

And off she went to dinner with rebellion in her heart.

IV

Gamlingay dined alone,—but under another roof. Not that he was fed up with Farquhar after having lunched tête-à-tête at the Marguery and walked about the city with him for a couple of hours, dodging a death of which he was not afraid. But he felt that he needed to be alone in order to think things over. He was bringing himself up reluctantly to the point of beating a retreat from New York,—from America, in fact. He had not discussed it with Farquhar, and, therefore, did not know that this man, this usually definite man, was in the same state of bewildered indecision, with his thoughts turned to the sea.

The conversation during lunch and afterwards had resolved itself, more or less, into a solo by Gamlingay. Farquhar was not a talker, whereas the English novelist always had much to say and said it devilish well. He had made a close study of all the troubles which nobody in poor old England seemed to be able to solve. He could talk with intelligence on political economy, foreign relations, the dangerous growth of communism, industrial unrest, as well as on art and music, literature and personalities. He was not one of the writing men who are absorbed merely in their own subjects and sit with their backs to the window.

The fact that he liked Farquhar more and more, and sympathized with him, had nothing to do with his half-formed resolve to return to his house in England. His instinct not to cheat had weakened and petered out. It had become a plain fact that Farquhar was not considering Helen as a woman, but only as the mother of Jean. He felt, therefore, that he was not required to strain at a point of honour in regard to a woman who was only a wife in name.

Helen herself was responsible for his growing desire for home. It was obvious that she was playing mermaid with him, marking time in order to see how far and how soon it might be necessary to combine forces with her husband against their recalcitrant girl.

During his lonely dinner he put himself metaphorically on one end of a seesaw, Helen on the other, and the reticent but worried Farquhar in the middle, and tried to balance the thing.

He argued, and as it happened rightly, that Helen would not have sent him that message to call for her at eleven o'clock if she had finally made up her mind to draw back and let him depart. After those painful days of fencing and evasion her message meant, he hoped, that she had emerged from mental detours and was ready to take up the desirable intrigue where Jean had broken it off.

He was to take her to dance somewhere, to hold her in his arms on a crowded floor until the early hours of the morning and enjoy the only polite opportunity which civilization affords of an exchange of licensed passion in a public place.

He had to confess to himself, being honest, that he

deeply regretted the presence of Farquhar at this juncture of his life, but for all that, and his belief in a future life for which his present existence was merely an apprenticeship, he saw no reason why he should not take what sweets he could along the road. He had said that love was the only thing, and it was. Humanity was frail and it was not good either for a man or a woman to live alone. Helen needed him as much as he needed her, he thought, though this was yet to be proved. What earthly reason was there why they should pass like ships in the night?

In his excitement at the new turn he hardly knew how to kill the time between nine o'clock and eleven. If he had been asked he would have said that he had marched up one chasm and down another at the entire mercy of a green and red light, stopping from time to time to look, with eyes that were turned inwards, at a thousand lighted windows in which a million unnecessary temptations were cleverly displayed; that he had passed through people and noises, gusts of wind that sent papers flying and indiscriminate smells.

Once, on his solitary amble, he had gone beneath the walls of the Farquhar house and looked up at the window of Helen's bedroom with a wild catch of his breath.

He thanked his stars when, finally, precisely to the minute, he rang the bell of No. 2 East 69th Street. He sent his name up to Helen and waited in the hall. But not for long. Almost at once he heard her voice at the top of the stairs and saw her small arched foot. She was telling, he knew, a white lie in order to get away. The absence of Mrs. Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar, the leader

of New York society, would ruin the remainder of the evening for whoever the hostess was.

Helen came down with a swift and laughing rush and her most mischievous smile. She said "Quick. Let's make a dash for it before any of the others see you." She made a motion to the footman and told him to call her car.

"Where are we going?" asked Gamlingay.

"Clean off the map," she said.

He handed her in and thrilled at the touch of her hand. She need not have chaffed him about his eccentric garments. But for the too wide brim of his opera hat he was 1926. He was one of those men who looked extremely well in evening clothes. They showed up his height, squareness and grace.

"Well, what have you been doing?" she asked.

To which he replied, with almost painful sincerity, "Putting a red mark on the calendar by worshipping at your shrine."

"Elizabethan," she said lightly, and ran her hand through his arm. "I hoped that you'd been having a nap."

"What? For God's sake, why?"

"Because I'm going to keep you out until the boy comes with the milk."

"Not if I know it. I shall take you home at one o'clock. I want the rest of the night."

He spoke before he could put on the break,—just blurted it out.

She looked at him with raised eyebrows and drew her hand away. But it was fake and somehow he knew it,—not prudishness but feminine wile. And there was

a softness all about her, a slackening of resistance, a sweetness, a surrender that gave out that she had come out beyond her defences with a white flag.

He took her hand and held it, running his fingers through hers.

"You adorable thing, you darling," he said. "Oh God, I love you."

And when her eyes melted and her nostrils fluttered he put his arm round her shoulder and lips upon her lips. She was not like stone that night.

They were afraid to speak after that.

They drove in silence,—a most eloquent silence, to a place that was far uptown. In blazing letters it announced itself as "Florida". It was amusingly done. All the way round the room there were windows like those of a bungalow, a tropical country club. And on an enormous backcloth there was painted a glorified view of sea and beach, palm trees, yachts, orange groves and oleanders, house boats at anchor, motor boats driving swiftly through the bluest of waters. Numerous small tables, crowded with people in day clothes, were arranged all round the dancing space. It was not the sort of cabaret in which Mrs. Farquhar was likely to be recognized by one of her set. It was patronized by the *hoi polloi,* many of whom were foreigners, swarthy and black of hair. Gamlingay's hat and coat were taken by a girl in bathing clothes whose skin had been painted to represent sunburn. A nice touch of local colour, he thought.

He gave an order for a table and took Helen on to the floor. The coloured musicians were playing with gusto, as though they enjoyed their job. They were

under the direction of an enormously fat man who did startling things on a saxophone from time to time. His body and those of the orchestra swayed to the rhythm of their music and their feet marked time. The very essence of jazz oozed from their instruments. And every one of them wore a broad grin which stretched from ear to ear. A gay and simple lot, just as the dancers were.

"You know how to choose," said Gamlingay. "This is immense. I wonder if they have supplied mosquitoes among other accurate attractions. May I kiss them away if they attack you?"

"You have a free hand," she said.

He held her tighter. And above the music he heard the song of a bird.

And thus they danced and danced, wedged in on every side, unnoticed, mere atoms in an ever moving scrum, breast to breast. The generous band gave few pauses. Then, suddenly, there was a clash of cymbals, the dimming of lights and a mass movement to the tables. A coloured girl, half naked, sprang into the deserted circle.

Gamlingay looked at his watch.

"It's one o'clock," he said. "Let's go."

And with uncharacteristic obedience Helen threaded her way to the door. Her blood was dancing and her eyes were very bright.

In the car Gamlingay bent forward and kissed her on the lips. Like a member of the *hoi polloi,* a happy shop girl, Helen put her head on his shoulder. As they entered civilization she sighed, laughed, sat bolt upright and began to powder her nose. They might have been husband and wife by the time they arrived at the house, except for the fact that he said something under his

breath that only lovers say. To which she nodded and replied unevenly, "Give me half an hour. Then be careful. Creep."

He might have been Sir Walter Raleigh as he handed her out. He opened the door with a latch key and they went into the hall.

There, waiting as usual, but with a new expression of anger and horror, stood Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar, the American aristocrat.

"My God," said Gamlingay, under his breath. "Something's gone wrong, I'm afraid."

And Helen replied, "I'm afraid so. Something always does."

"I want you both if you don't mind," said Farquhar. "Will you come to the morning room, please?"

They followed him with the greatest reluctance and both of them were cold. The expression on Farquhar's face and the extraordinary sag of his shoulders had brought an instant cloud up which had completely covered their sun.

He marched up to the fireplace. A cable had been placed against the clock. He said, "This is from Anastasia. It was here when I got back. I've been waiting to read it to you."

He took it up and drew the message from its envelope. "It says 'Better come over with Helen by next boat. Jean is deplorably in love with a pianist. He is a Jew."

PART V

I

It was Lady Warminster's turn to feel like a bird of ill omen. This was her husband's rôle in life. She preferred the part for which she had been born,—the placid barnyard hen. She was waiting with Lord Warminster at 40 Grosvenor Square for the arrival of her brother and his wife. They had pelted her with wireless messages on their way across the Atlantic, and the last of these had begged her to be good enough to see that their house was in order and to meet them there with Jean. Lady Warminster had two bad surprises for the anxious parents up her sleeve, one of which the dear soul dreaded to have to spring.

The elderly Diehard was cheerful. On the top of his form, by George. He reveled in disasters and crises. He was never so happy as when he stood on the very lip of a chasm. He was one of those prophets of gloom,—the aftermath of the war,—who love to be able to say "There you are, you see," and "What did I tell you" when a more than usually horrible prognostication comes true by accident. There was something tragically comic in the way in which he had planted himself in the middle of the draw-

ing-room with his thumbs in the slits of his waistcoat, there to meet his distressed American relations as soon as they entered the house.

What a chance was his! With what eloquence he could denounce the members of the younger generation, the decay of manners, the demoralization of ethics, and get off some of the well-preached speeches at which his own young people yawned, or said "Oh God!" He was a dear old boy, all the same. Appalling to live with, but a delightful nearby neighbour. His heart was exactly in the right place. He was generous, kind and easily moved by kindness, in fact rather pathetically grateful when one of his young cubs treated him decently and spent the day out shooting with him or playing two rounds of golf. His love of country was passionate and splendid. Any day of the week he would gladly die for his King. He was good with dogs and horses and tenants, could smell fine or bad weather like a sailor, knew trees and flowers and wall fruit, and instantly became a schoolboy at the sight of a ball. His croquet was Bismarckian, Napoleonic, a masterly exposition of strategy, a frightful business. He had been born long after his time.

Lady Warminster had not been required to exercise very much of her slow but dogged energy in the reopening of the house. It was more or less always open. The butler, the housekeeper, the two footmen, Farquhar's valet and a nucleus of maids were permanent fixtures, although, as a rule, they were not required to be on active service for longer than two months a year. They lived in clover. They might have been civil servants permanently engaged in the simple Whitehall process of winding and unwinding

balls of Government tape. They lived on a glorified dole. And were consistent movie fans. What minds they must have had! The presence of Lady Warminster annoyed them very much.

With extraordinary punctuality Farquhar and Helen walked into the drawing-room. Greetings were a little abrupt,—like those that occur between relations who have assembled from distant parts to attend a cousin's funeral.

They had driven up from Southampton and had left a man to pass their things through the Customs and follow by train to town. Anxiety had not prevented Farquhar from keeping himself fit on board. Sea and salt breezes had given his face a becoming tan. It was not a lack of affection that made him merely peck his sister's cheek. He was in a hurry to ask about his daughter. She was his obsession. He was hurt and disappointed, therefore, not to find her in the room.

"Pretty good," said Warminster, in a more and more excellent temper. "Although everything else has gone to pot the steamship Lines maintain efficiency, I see."

"It's awfully kind of you to have got things ready," Farquhar said to his sister. "And to have met us here. Where's Jean?"

"In Paris," announced Warminster, before his wife could speak.

Under any other circumstances she would have been almost angry at his having commandeered the first of her surprises.

"What!" cried Farquhar. "My God."

Helen threw up her hands.

"Yes," said Lady Warminster, "I'm sorry to have to tell you that she went away yesterday morning, early, be-

fore any of us were dressed. She left a message to say that she would be in Paris that night."

"Why Paris? And why couldn't she have waited to see us? I suppose you told her that we were coming?"

"Certainly I told her. I did everything that you asked me to do and one or two things on my own responsibility that I thought might help a little."

"Where is she staying in Paris? Paris! This is a goose chase."

"With the Duchesse de Bercy,—which is something to be thankful for. It means that she is being conventional and not, as Harry prophesied when I told him of her departure, 'out on the loose'."

"I know these gels, that's why," said Warminster. "None of mine care tuppence about laws or rules. Sibyl, Evelyn and even Gladys, although she's still at school, wouldn't think twice, any of 'em, about goin' away, quite openly, with any man they fancied."

At which Lady Warminster ruffled her feathers, uttered a series of barnyard noises and turned with genuine anger upon the pessimistic specialist.

"They've never done and never will do anything of the sort. How *can* you say such a thing! And even if they did it would be perfectly properly done. I mean they would go together, protecting each other, with a maid and thoughts of me."

To Farquhar the production of this domestic red herring was the epitome of irony. He had not driven that great liner all across, to him, the loneliest of the seas, to listen to wrangles about other people's girls. Angry and terrified he had dashed over to put a stop to the anarchy of his own daughter and haul her out of an association the

mere mention of which among the gossipmongers would mean disgrace to the family name.

The presence of two perfectly drilled footmen with all the appurtenances of an English tea held up further words. Lady Warminster settled. Warminster, who loved crumpets with an almost perverted passion, stood ready to pounce. Farquhar, on edge with impatience, marched up and down the room in which all his treasures mocked him. And Helen, tired, spent and nervous, proceeded to make up her face. She would have done this on her way to the scaffold as well as to a throne. Joy and sorrow, excitement and depression, were all marked by the production of powder and lipstick from the depths of a very smart bag.

Almost before the door had closed upon these mechanical men Farquhar started again. "Who is this person?" he asked, "and how the devil did Jean come across him? Surely not in your house?"

"Why not?" asked Warminster, with his mouth full and a blob of butter on his chin. "Liberty Hall,—that's what my house is. If ever I feel inclined to meet bounders and loose fish all I have to do is to make a tour of inspection. Behind clouds of tobacco smoke every afternoon of the week you can always find poets, ragtime artists, kidglove socialists, Balliol bloods, racing touts . . ."

"Oh, Harry, don't go on like that!"

"For the love of God," cried Farquhar, "concentrate on us. I beg your pardon, but under the circumstances I think that you might answer my questions and let me know the facts. Who is this man and where does he come from?"

"He's an American," said Lady Warminster, "His name is Max . . . Max,—Oh dear me, I cannot remember names."

"It's Lorbenstein," said Warminster, whose memory was good.

"Lorbenstein!"

Farquhar shuddered, and a chill ran down his spine.

Helen's hand was shaken out of its unerring precision. She made a red stain on her cheek. Think of the glee of reporters and the nasty joy of the women who had never been able to climb into her list of invitations when it got about that Jean was in love with a man with such a name!

"He's the rage of musical London," said Lady Warminster, who, though greatly distressed, thought that she ought, in her kind way, to temper the wind, the gale. "He gave two concerts at Queen's Hall that were packed to overflowing. The *Tatler* devoted a whole page to his photograph and he has been taken up by several duchesses and is able to hang his hat in the most exclusive houses."

"Exclusive houses," broke in Warminster, with a sneer. "Find 'em, find 'em. I can't."

"At any rate, he was a great success both on and off the concert platform. According to Sibyl, who has seen and heard him, he is the new Paderewski. And when I asked her what he was like she said that he was a cross between Pelias and the angel Gabriel. Which conveys nothing to me. He 'did something to me', she said, in her strange language. He had the same effect upon her, she informed me, as half a tumbler of Crême Yvette. It made her feel mauve."

"Mauve!" The word made Farquhar sick.

"Then, too, he seems to be very well off. He drives

about in a Rolls Royce, has a flat in Berkley Square and has even gone to the lengths of buying one of the most beautiful houses in England, the Sterkeley's place, 'Old Burgess',—you know it, Erskine. You rented it, I remember, in 19 . . . 19 . . . Oh, dear me, I'm getting so bad at dates."

"That makes no difference," said Farquhar. "The man's a Jew."

Helen spoke. She said "Did Jean leave for Paris simply because she knew that we were coming?"

"Not at all, my dear. I really don't believe that she had you in her thoughts."

"That's obvious," said Farquhar.

"When I told her that you had asked me to open the house, she insisted on coming with me in the kindest possible way. She buzzed from room to room and seemed to enjoy the fun. She brought Max Lorbenstein with her several times, showed him all over the place, made him try the piano and was very merry and bright. I have never seen a girl so happy or so full of herself. But she wasn't thinking about you. In fact, she never mentioned your name."

The old lady's simple frankness cut Helen like a sword.

With a sort of sarcastic courtesy Farquhar said "you paint a charming picture. Please go on."

And Helen, with something between a laugh and a sob, put a cushion behind her back. She saw no reason why she shouldn't be comfortable even if she were forced to listen to a perfectly good-natured but staggering indictment. "May I ask you," she said, "if at any time during our crossing Jean saw the various messages that we dosed you with?"

"Oh, dear me, yes," said Lady Warminster. "She saw them all. Every morning I called her into my bedroom and handed them to her."

"What did she do?"

"She laughed. They appeared to amuse her immensely and she called you dear old things. Don't run away with the idea that she's not fond of you. She is. In fact, I have never heard any girl say nicer things about her parents. She really admires you both. But in thinking it over I've come to the conclusion that she has grown out of you. In fact, she's told me that she was 'on her own'."

"Yes, but that's impossible," said Farquhar. "She's in a partnership. And if she doesn't realize this . . . I was going to say that she must be made to do so. But, my God, how?"

Helen straightened and narrowed her beautiful eyes. Her fighting spirit was roused. It seemed to her to be a cruel and peculiar thing that the only person in the world who had ever stood up against her was the girl upon whom she had lavished whatever love she could spare.

"We will see about that," she said.

Farquhar reverted to a point which had begun to rankle in his mind. "Am I really to understand, my dear Anastasia, that she brought Mr. Lorbenstein *here?* After all, this is my house."

"Many times, my dear. They have been together often in this very room, and when I came downstairs on Friday last, after satisfying myself that your beds were properly made and all the towels were out, I found her hunched up on the sofa listening to that young man who was playing the piano like an angel, with his long black hair over his eyes."

"Long black hair," said Farquhar. "I could have betted on that."

"He was playing Debussy. I love Debussy. I confess that I forgot all about everything, beds and towels and all, and I assure you on my word of honour that never in my life have I heard such an exquisite rendering of that man's music as was given by that boy."

"Boy? How old is the fellow then?"

"Not a day over twenty-five," said Lady Warminster. "And he looks even younger than that. If you don't mind my saying so he's really rather a dear,—so kind, so thoughtful, so courteous. To watch those two together is like looking at a picture of a nymph and a faun come miraculously to life. They laugh and joke and play hide and seek, and one expects silver birches to spring out of the carpets and to hear the sound of pipes. I'm not an imaginative person. I hardly ever read poetry. But, somehow, they remind me of Shakespeare, green swards, fountains, and sunlight glittering through trees. They are speechlessly in love, poor darlings. It's really almost pathetic. Such happiness cannot last. One feels that sooner or later the light must fade and that rain will drive them in."

Farquhar and his wife exchanged a long and eloquent glance. Both of them seemed to see Northrup, the clean-limbed, short-haired Northrup, returning quietly from his office, strong, normal, unmusical, inarticulate. This picture of Jean with her Eton bob and short skirt, so ultra modern, so coolly sophisticated, prancing about like a Spring maiden with a man with long black hair and a curly nose filled them with dismay and astonishment. They couldn't believe it was true.

"How did she pick him up?" asked Helen. "That's what I can't understand."

"Oh, my dear," said Lady Warminster, "that was easy enough. The boy was the latest hero. Duchesses asked one to meet him. He was their strongest card. If one couldn't put on one's invitation 'To meet Max Lorbenstein' one was not in the running, one was as good as dead. I have never had the exact story from Jean, but Sibyl told me that, after hearing him play at Queen's Hall that afternoon, your dear girl was driven to Carlton House Terrace by Lady Idridgehaye, saw the boy, and fell instantly in love. Ever since then those two have been inseparable. It's the talk of the town. It goes without saying, of course, that he fell in love with her. Sibyl tells me that he proposed to Jean the very next night at Ranelagh."

"My God, are they engaged? Has it gone as far as that?"

"Oh yes indeed," said Lady Warminster. "It's all quite proper, you know. You see the poor boy's a gentleman, although he was born a Jew."

Once more Farquhar turned to his wife and caught her stultified gaze.

"Go on from there," he said.

"Is there any more to tell?"

"Isn't there? I mean, why have they gone to Paris? Why didn't Jean stay to met us? Why didn't this nice boy, whom you admire so much and who's such a little gentleman, stay over and come to see me, and say 'You have the honour to meet your future son-in-law'? If he really knows how to behave why didn't he wait to receive my congratulations, my fatherly blessing, and all

that sort of thing? . . . My daughter Mrs. Lorbenstein. My daughter who has committed social suicide. My son-in-law to whom the doors of every good Club in America are absolutely closed. . . ."

"Well, you see, Mr. Lorbenstein had several engagements in Paris and of course he had to go. It seemed perfectly natural for Jean to go with him, although I argued the point with her. She's staying with the Duchesse de Bercy. Max has a house in Paris,—an amazing place, they say."

"Did she go alone with him?"

"Oh yes, quite alone." Lady Warminster looked up with an odd little smile and added, "They do these things today."

And after a lengthy silence during which Farquhar paced about, he went to his wife and put his hand on her shoulder, and said "Tell me, can you be ready to catch the Continental train in the morning or shall I do this thing myself?"

Whereupon Helen rose. "Don't bother," she cried out. "Let them alone. We're useless. I told you so before. I wish to God that I had stayed in New York and gone on with my life." And once more she repeated the old formula. "There's nothing to be done. Nothing. Nothing."

To which Farquhar said, "Isn't there? You don't know me. I'll smash this up if it breaks Jean's heart, Lorbenstein's piano, and my future peace of mind."

The elderly Peer, who had been done out of his much desired chance to make a smashing speech, took advantage of the pause that followed to throw a fly on the stream.

"Why?" he asked, as a leader.

Farquhar was amazed. "Why? What the devil do you mean? . . . Haven't you heard that this man's a Jew? He may be a gentleman, he may be a genius, he may be as good-looking as a moving picture star, he may have enough money with which to buy me up, but the fact that he is a Jew makes him, with us in America, a pariah dog. Racial prejudice is stronger in my country today than it has ever been. The mere suggestion of his marrying my daughter is inconceivable. I'm not a snob. I don't care who Jean eventually marries, so long as he's an honest, decent, fellow with a straight nose, even if he's a policeman,—although I'd very much rather she did nothing of the sort. We've chosen the man we want. As Mrs. Lorbenstein it would be utterly impossible for Jean to hold up her head in New York. And she has got to live in New York. Don't you understand?"

Greatly to his wife's astonishment Warminster was silent for a moment. As a rule he had plenty to say. He pulled his walrus moustache and gave the question more consideration than he was in the habit of doing.

"No," he said, finally, "I don't."

"Why not?"

"What you say as to the American point of view comes as a surprise. I ought to tell you that, over here, we're not so down on Jews. Since the days of Disraeli, who was a damned fine chap, and later, during the Edwardian régime, tolerance has spread and racial prejudice gone by the board. In this country we say, 'Live and let live.' We have our pet Jews here and they are men of great brilliance and integrity. We don't hesitate, as you must know, to appoint them to the highest places.

They are to be found in both Houses of Parliament, at the Bar, and in society. We like 'em and treat 'em well. If they are good men and do their jobs we don't care a tuppenny damn what sort of noses they have, and there are notable instances of their having married our daughters, although they prefer to intermarry. They are proud people. I may go as far as to say that they have their aristocrats. Personally I never had the vaguest prejudice against 'em, not the vaguest, and I may tell you, quite honestly, that if this man Lorbenstein is a gentleman, as my good lady believes he is, I wouldn't hesitate for a single minute in giving my consent to his marriage to any one of my gels. In fact I would a jolly sight rather that Sibyl or Evelyn married a full blooded Jew who is an excellent and responsible person than a young waster who belongs to one of our oldest families,—became the wife of a worthy young fellow whatever his nationality or religion than the silly ass son of a member of my class such as I frequently meet at my house."

He puffed out his chest, and, as much to his own astonishment as that of his wife and her people, felt that he had pulled his feet out of the deep trenches of Diehardism for once and become as much up to date as his socialistic son. It was an achievement and he was thrilled.

So were they. But in the case of Farquhar and his wife they were appalled as well.

II

Farquhar left his wife with his sister. He felt that that kindly, capable lady, the mother of six children and the wife of a man who mostly turned his back to the on-

ward march of things and made a hobby of gloom, might be able to render his wife a service.

All the way over on the ship she had been in a state of aloof dejection. Her usual babble of conversation had dried up, brightness had deserted her and she had hardly laughed at all. Farquhar could compare her only with a place like Vichy out of the season, with its Casino closed, its music gone, its flowers over, its seats turned up, its Parc deserted, and the leaves of all its delightful trees scattered by the wind. It had been very disconcerting to him. It had added to his burdens. He had wondered what she had been thinking about as she sat hour after hour in her deck-chair, enveloped in rugs like a mummy, with her eyes fixed on the horizon which came above the rail of the ship at one moment and sank beneath it at another. He had seen quite plainly that her thoughts were not devoted to this Jean trouble, although when he had spoken about it, as he did again and again, she had answered him, agreed with his point of view and appeared to be anxious to be with her daughter. But as he had watched her from his chair at her elbow, it had dawned upon him that Gamlingay, and what he had meant to her, was the main subject of her rumination. And from what she had let drop from time to time, unguardedly,—especially one very clear night when they were pacing the deck together before turning in,—he believed that she had begun to recognize the horrible but inevitable truth that, as in his own case, it was time that she began to be good.

She was forty-five, he remembered,—not a great age for a woman as life is conducted today. An age, nevertheless, when a woman with some shreds of dignity, with

manners and breeding, and enough sense of humour to prevent her from making a fool of herself, cried a halt to the rather lamentable imitation of youth that was the fashion; slipped, however reluctantly, into a backwater and tied up to a tree. He would have been a hard, unimaginative and vulgar person if he had not felt a deep sympathy and comradeship for this woman at his side. And he was none of these. The thing that he most hated in life was age with its deplorable retirements, handicaps and slowings down. And he had seen that behind this woman's lovely shell the relentless hand of Anno Domini was making itself felt.

Never before had he and she spent so many hours together as on that bewildered crossing. They had lunched and dined. They had taken exercise up and down the deck. He had paid her as much attention as though she were a bride. She had been suffering, and it had been his job to do what he could, in his inarticulate way, to alleviate her pain. After the first two days she had recognized his efforts, welcomed them, and shown her gratitude every night when he escorted her to her suite by saying a few nice words. "Thank you, Erskine" for instance, or "How kind you are to me." And on the night before the ship had arrived at Cherbourg, she had said without her usual sarcasm, as a simple statement, "No wonder you have been such a success with women. You understand, it seems."

He had been glad, apart from its reason, of this change in her. He hated brightness, the constant effort to say smart things, the continual laughter when it did not seem to be required, and all those ghastly mechanical effects of flippancy, insincerity and unseriousness that make up

the society manner. He had always admired this woman. He had found himself liking her then. And because of that he had studied those of her charming qualities which she had hidden behind her glittering screen. And once or twice during that unavoidable juxtaposition a sweep of homesickness had overwhelmed him, and he had been moved, with a needle through his heart, to wish that he had married her for love.

He was a very lonely person, and although he never said so in a spirit of martyrdom, even to himself,—he was wholly devoid of that,—he had felt strangely like a man who had followed his desires wherever they led and had returned to civilization to find that most of his friends were dead, that his old haunts were gone or altered, and that a new generation had taken complete possession.

Gamlingay had crossed on another ship and was somewhere on the same waters. He had left the house in Park Avenue the morning after the arrival of Lady Warminster's cable. Farquhar was under the impression that he had not seen Helen again. Jean was responsible, therefore, not only for the break-up of the Villa Pico della Mirandola, but for that of the Park Avenue intrigue of his wife and the novelist. All three had been routed by youth, as winter is driven before Spring.

Hearing from Willett, with whom he had communicated by telephone, that Lillian Shepreth was living at Number 38a Wilton Place, Farquhar left Grosvenor Square and turned his face towards Knightsbridge. He had promised Lillian that he would call upon her in whatever house she had settled as soon as he returned to London. He now intended to keep this promise although he knew that in so doing he would rub salt into his wounds.

If he had had his way he never would have seen her again, and he couldn't understand how it was that she could undergo the pain of another meeting. He didn't understand women or their strange psychology. He knew far more about fish, pheasants, crocodiles and deer.

Willett had told him, rather excitedly he thought, that Mrs. Shepreth was happy in her little house, that it did have a yard for her dog, and a nice big bedroom for the boy for whose university education she had made herself responsible. He turned into Piccadilly, was thankful to see that someone or other had filled up that disconcerting gap just beyond the Cavalry Club which had made that excellent street resemble a mouth in which one of its front teeth had been missing. He crossed and walked on the Park side of the street, that charming Park where the grass was always green and the trees became more and more beautiful with age. They were the only things, he thought, that were improved by this process. But he wondered why it was that the London authorities permitted so many uncomfortable exhibitions of unselfconscious love-making to go on in full view of the public. In America the abrupt orders to "keep off" were enforced by uniformed officials imbued with the principles of prohibition.

He noticed, without surprise, that many of the buildings were shabby, and that the Bachelors Club especially wore a very seedy appearance. In looking at Hyde Park corner he could hardly believe now that at one time in its history there had been a searchlight on its arch. The pathetic appeal which was printed on a huge board outside the hospital almost persuaded him to send a cheque to the authorities for the desired coat of paint.

He noted with a certain sadness the various changes that were coming over London. He had known the old city since his boyhood and he was jealous of its dignity and traditions. He had already shuddered at the sight of the huge new building which had been erected on the place where Devonshire House and its wonderful garden had stood. Where had its thrushes gone? Streams of buses and other motor vehicles made so much noise that he could hardly hear himself think. The intermittent bicycle was an anachronism.

Arrived at his destination he found a newly painted little house in a line of little houses. It had a smart door with a wrought iron knocker and a balcony on the second floor, on which there were tubs of ferns. It looked very cheerful and gay. It reminded Farquhar of an adventurous elderly lady who had been persuaded to dye her hair and have her eyebrows plucked, shorten her rather old fashioned frocks and add an inch to her heels. He wished to God that he lived there instead of in Grosvenor Square.

There was a small brass plate screwed to the door on which the words "Knock and ring" were engraved. He did so. Almost immediately the door was opened by a nice looking maid.

He said, "Is Mrs. Shepreth in?"

"Yes, Sir. What name please?"

He gave his name.

She said, "If you will please come up to the drawing-room I will tell Mrs. Shepreth. She has only just come in and I think she is up in her bedroom."

She was very chatty and amiable, and, it seemed to Farquhar, somewhat excited at the sight of a visitor.

In going through the small hall to the extremely narrow staircase he caught a glimpse of a rather nice imitation of a Jacobean dresser which was loaded with blue plates. And on his way upstairs he was distinctly pleased with the prints that hung closely on the wall. They were very pleasant, he thought. The drawing-room ran from the front to the back of the house with an archway in the middle. Two rooms had been knocked into one. It was the most feminine place that he had ever seen in his life, —filled with innumerable small tables and crowded with spindle legged chairs, and sofas filled with cushions. There was not one piece of furniture in it that he would have looked at twice. It was a room, nevertheless, which reeked with charm and cheerfulness. It was utterly unpretentious and simple,—the sort of room in which a man could make himself comfortable and look through a cloud of pipe smoke at a woman who knew how to be quiet, who made an art of leisure, and took an inconspicuous delight in mending socks. He went across to the far end of it and looked down on a small square of garden that was neatly and deftly laid out. Lillian's little dog was barking at imaginary cats.

When the door opened he turned with his heart in his throat, but instead of seeing Lillian he saw a tall, good-looking boy, square-shouldered, deep-chested, who held himself as though he had been drilled. He was very young, probably not eighteen, round-faced, healthy, very fair, with amazingly blue eyes. He wore a Charterhouse tie.

He drew up short at the sight of Farquhar. "I beg your pardon," he said. "Are you waiting for my aunt?"

"Yes," said Farquhar, and held out his hand. "My name's Farquhar. I'm a very old friend of your aunt's. You're Alan Bracknell, I know."

"Yes, Sir."

He grinned in a friendly manner and showed no surprise at being known, although it was obvious that he had never heard of the man whom he had never seen before. There was nothing in his eyes to show that Lillian had taken him even vaguely into her confidence. Why should she?

He added, "I'm down for the weekend. We're doing a show tonight, and tomorrow we're driving to Wargrave. If the weather's decent we're going on the river. Rather fun."

"Great fun," said Farquhar. "A ripping programme. You're in your last term at school, I suppose?"

"Rather. Then Oxford." He squared his shoulders and shoved out his chest. "Magdalen. Rather hot, I think."

"Frightfully hot," said Farquhar. "You'll row I suppose."

"If they'll have me. But, you see, there isn't a river at Charterhouse. We're cricket and footer and squash. We haven't the luck to be wet bobs like those uppish Etonians. I shall have a shot at it though."

"I should," said Farquhar. "Nothing like rowing for the forearm and *esprit de corps.*"

The boy brought out a cigarette case. "I'm afraid they're stinkers," he said.

And Farquhar, who had never been seduced into smoking a cigarette in his life, took one, waiting while this

friendly lad performed an operation upon a self-lighter. He then lit it and smoked with gusto, though he hated the thing.

"Charming house," he said.

The boy looked round the room with immense approval.

"Great, isn't it? I live here, you know. That is, this is my headquarters whenever I can dash down from Charterhouse. We have had a frightful spree buying furniture. You should see my room."

"I should like to," said Farquhar. "Perhaps you'll take me up later."

He began to wonder where Lillian was, and why she didn't appear. There was no need to make up her face for him.

He had his back to the door when she opened it at last. He would have known her quiet footfall if he had found himself in what Gamlingay called the "second plane," and had been waiting there earthbound until she joined him. He wheeled round, and, as the boy was present, and also because he felt that he had no more right to her, adopted an air of an acquaintance and held out a formal hand. It required the rigid self-control that only comes with age.

He said, "How do you do, Lillian? I'm in London for a day or two, perhaps less, and I thought that you would permit me to give myself the pleasure of looking you up."

She adopted his tone and his manner. They might have met at a garden party, or a tea fight, or at the Eton and Harrow match. Anywhere. It was very well done by both.

"How nice of you," she said. "Do sit down, and I'll ring for tea."

"Please don't bother," said Farquhar. "Isn't it rather late?"

"No. My boy and I have only just come in. We've been buying clothes."

"Not clothes," said Alan laughing. "You mean shirts and ties."

He was young enough to wish that Farquhar shouldn't labour under the impression that he got his clothes off the peg.

Gorgeously young, thought Farquhar, and envied him.

Touching the bell with a trembling finger Lillian then made a gesture towards a comfortable chair, and Farquhar noticed that it was an absolute replica of the one in which he used to sit in his room in Fiesole. Newer, that was all, and without the mark of his head,—which left a mark, because he was one of those men who put tonic on their hair.

"She's not forgotten," he said to himself, and placed a metaphorical candle at the feet of the Madonna.

It was a tragic interview, conducted pleasantly. Caste and tradition played their excellent parts. And while the boy babbled and laughed, went off at a dozen tangents, talked school stuff, and referred again and again to Oxford with a sparkling eye, those two, who had loved each other and still loved, maintained an attitude of polite acquaintanceship like champions at the game. Once or twice only they exchanged looks in which they permitted themselves a rush of passionate words, of mutual gratitude for never-to-be-forgotten favours, and the recollection of happiness which nothing could wipe out.

Lillian's delight at the friendship which the man and the boy had struck up was moving and amusing, though to Farquhar, who saw in this lad the very spit of the son of whom he had dreamed, it was very painful business.

He was glad and sorry when the moment came when he rose to say "Goodbye." He would take the picture of that house and its furniture its small bright yard, and those two who were so devoted, to Paris, and wherever else he was forced to go by Jean, that will-o'-the-wisp.

He said, "Goodbye. I shall hope to see you before I sail, though I don't know when that will be." He bowed over Lillian's hand which he longed to put to his lips. "Goodbye, young fellow," he said to Alan. "I may buzz up to Oxford to see you some day or other. The very best of luck. Don't forget your books."

"Wait a sec," said the boy, "You're coming to see my room."

"Oh yes, that's true," said Farquhar. "Lead the way."

The boy made a dash for the stairs and Farquhar turned at the door. But he did no more than say to Lillian, though with a break in his voice, "A delightful boy. I hope to God he'll be worthy of you."

To which she nodded and smiled. She was unable to speak.

"Coming?"

"On the way," said Farquhar, developing a cold.

The room was really an attic, low-ceilinged, and with two windows in the roof. But it was fairly large and very comfortable, with bookshelves, a camp bed, an enormous sofa, and a wide stretch of Turkey carpet. It was cheerful,—like everything else in that house,—and with numerous cheap reproductions of famous Italian pictures.

"What do you think of it? Isn't it great? I don't know why, but somehow it reminds me of Oxford. I've spotted a room in the High which is just like this. My aunt's a frightful dab at making rooms exactly right. I wish she were my mother."

This was blurted out.

"I wish she were," said Farquhar. "Treat her as such, old boy."

And Alan said, "I'm going to. I never knew my own. She died when I was born. Rather tough luck, I think, don't you?"

"I do," said Farquhar. "How about your father?"

The boy shook his head and was silent. And then, having mastered his voice, he said, "My father was killed in the War. He was commanding the Buffs."

His head was high but his lips trembled.

"Well, carry on," Farquhar said. "And look here, make a note of my name. If ever I can do anything which your father would have done give me the opportunity. I shall be very glad. Remember that, will you?"

"Thanks most awfully, Sir."

He wasn't in the least surprised. There was nothing in his perfectly simple, unpoisoned mind which could cause the least surprise. This man was a friend of Aunt Lillian's, and, as such, couldn't be anything but a corker. And that he certainly was. Every inch a sportsman. And, by gum, what a damned nice tie. One of these days he might have the same tailor, perhaps, and shoes that had gone as red.

"So long, then."

"So long, Sir."

As Farquhar passed Lillian's room he saw a little table

by the side of the bed and on it a leather box with a lock. He recognized it as the one he had given to her when they had been shopping in Florence. She had taken a fancy to it,—a quite inexpensive thing, and had said, "It's exactly what I want to keep my treasures in." At the same time he had bought a small case of the same leather,—red, with gold toolings,—in which he had put a photograph of himself. On it he had written "Yours,—now and forever," and had slipped it in.

He knew that it was there. He knew that during the last moments of her day she took it out and held it to her breast. . . .

Compensation? . . . Oh, God.

III

The Farquhar house in Paris had been lent by Helen to a friend of hers in order that she might subject herself to the farcical regulations of the divorce laws of France. This was, as it happened, immensely inconvenient. It made a hotel necessary. Farquhar hated hotels. It meant, also, that he was obliged to take more luggage than was his habit to do.

After consulting Helen he had sent a telegram to the Manager of the Hotel Mercédès in the Rue de Presbourg, close to the Place de l'Etoile, and it was there that they arrived a little after five o'clock the following afternoon. A telegram had been sent also to the Duchesse de Bercy, and she, with her usual thoughtfulness, had spent an hour at the hotel warming up the suite with flowers, cushions, books, and a large box of chocolates from Rumpelmeyers,

so that it looked human, and as though it had been lived in,—not like the usual hotel rooms whose windows had been closed fast and whose formal arrangement of furniture made them precisely what they were,—a temporary alighting place, a telegraph wire to a swallow on the wing.

On a table with a glass top, underneath which there was a circle of lace, there was a note. It was in a salmon coloured envelope which bore the Bercy crest. It was addressed to Helen in the long, thin, slanting handwriting of her relative. While the porters were bumping the luggage into the suite, from the sittingroom of which there was a delightful view of the Arc and the light which perpetually burnt to the memory of the Unknown Soldier, Helen opened the letter. It was in French, and so that it should not be taken in by the men who came in and out she translated as she read.

"4:30. My dear. I will not attempt to answer your letter written from the ship. It came to me on my breakfast tray this morning. Let us leave our discussion as to Jean's state of mind until we meet this afternoon. Knowing well what you Americans think of the Jewish people, —some of us have that prejudice too,—I can so well understand your agony and terror. Nevertheless, I know this Lorbenstein, which is to say that I have met him several times here in Paris during the last two years and listened to his playing. He is not quite the same thing. So that you may see him for yourselves, and judge, I have arranged for him to play at my house at six o'clock. A little gathering. Come then, and afterwards dine with me intimately and we will put our heads together. If I were to say that Jean has been hypnotized it would be true and false. I have found already that although your

Jean is rather madly in love,—I mean by that more naïvely and palpably so than we of Paris ever permit ourselves to be in public,—she has her lucid moments when she is, as I have found her, essentially the dear sweet girl, as clean as a silver birch, whose growth I have watched with affection and sympathy. Six o'clock then. Always to you. Angele de B."

"I see," said Farquhar. "Well, we must go. I would infinitely rather have seen Jean alone. However, I suppose it can't be helped. She's not considering us."

"I can't go dressed like this," said Helen. "You must give me time to change."

She went to the door of her bedroom, opened it and told the maid who was already unpacking exactly what she wanted.

"I must shove on the proper clothes," said Farquhar. "Frenchmen are always dressed for weddings, funerals or boudoirs."

He himself was in a suit of tweeds, gray, with brown shoes and a soft shirt. In another bedroom his valet had opened a wardrobe trunk.

"Afternoon clothes, Bassett. Wing collar, bow tie, white spats and a topper. Black overcoat,—the one with the velvet collar. Be quick, will you?"

He went back into the sittingroom, opened a small dispatch case, and took out his pipe and pouch. There was time for the comfort of an honest smoke. It would help him to steady himself. He felt as he had felt so often during the war, when, as a Colonel in the British Forces, he had faced a forward movement and taken his life in his hands.

He had, at any rate, something to be thankful for. Helen had recovered herself. Since leaving London that morning she had emerged from a long stretch of introspection and auto-revelation, out of which she had come with a renewal of courage; what Farquhar called, for want of a better term, a change of life. In the train from London, and on the intrepid but inadequate boat, she had shown, by many touches of her old quick wit, that she had come back to life. Her convalescence had been rapid, so that the journey from Calais to Paris had been a useful one. She had talked well and soundly on the Jean problem and had agreed definitely and strongly to side with Farquhar in his determination to break off her daughter's engagement to "this impossible Jew." Lord Warminster's statement as to the manner in which Jews were treated in England didn't affect this case. Strange as it might seem to him and to other English people America had made its own laws of social conventions. The strictest of them all was the one concerning Jews. Under no imaginable circumstances was it conceivable that her daughter, or the daughter of any member of their set, should marry a man, however wealthy or cultivated, who belonged to the Jewish race,—not, that is to say,—and she had added this,—with the consent of the parents. . . . With the consent of the parents!

To which Farquhar had linked on the very words which had immediately formed in her brain. "What earthly effect have the parents upon the actions of the girls of today?"

And as he stood at one of the windows looking across at the Arc, he thought "A perpetual flame to obedience,

loyalty, tradition. . . . Why is it that our children don't understand and don't believe in these three vital things?"

And, after a long pause, during which his mind went back to the war and the superb effort of the youth of those years, and further and further back to that cold and unmoved moment of his life when the birth of Jean had been announced to him in a house that had not been a home, he said to himself, "And yet, good Heavens, look at the result of our obedience! A dull fire of discontent throwing its intermittent light upon two people who made a sacrifice for the sordid combination of gold." And at that moment he was tempted to say, "Have we any right, we of all people, to interfere if Jean and this young man are splendidly in love? What is racial prejudice but the lowest form of snobbishness? Christ was a Jew. Isn't that enough?"

No, it wasn't. Not in his country and his class. Not among the people of his caste and position. Such a marriage would mean social suicide and ostracism unless Jean became a wandering cosmopolitan, dividing her life between London, Paris, Vienna and Budapest, so that the name of Farquhar disappeared from the pages of American history on the death of himself and his wife.

He heaved a sigh, and said out loud, "It's very difficult."

"Your things are ready, sir."

And so the man who had himself been a Bolshevik, by following his own inclinations and desires, passed into his bedroom to put on the regulation tailcoat and silk hat which Paris had decreed, in order to go forth and crush the Bolshevism of his own ewe lamb.

IV

It was at this moment that the concierge rang up on the telephone. It was required of him to say that Madame la Duchesse de Bercy had placed a car at the disposal of Monsieur and Madame Farkaire. He made several attempts at the name.

This was useful. Farquhar detested taxicabs and was not keen on hired cars. It bored him very much that his wife had lent his house to that friend of hers. He was in the habit of travelling in the manner of pre-War royalty and he felt that everything was out of gear when he was unable to go from the Grand Central to Park Avenue, from Waterloo to Grosvenor Square, and from the Gare du Nord to the Avenue de Bois Boulogne. Money. Money. He was the last man in the world to refer to that with scorn.

Helen came out of her room as he emerged from his. Under any other conditions he would have been amused at her punctuality. As it was it was she who laughed.

"I shall be a changed woman," she said, "if this sort of thing goes on."

And Farquhar welcomed both the laugh and the characteristic remark. He needed a very active partner, alert and full of courage. Yes. He had begun to like this woman.

"You look as though you had come out of your dressing-room in New York," he said, "and not as though you had covered a great slab of the map during the last ten days."

She was grateful for those kind words. "I can return

the compliment," she said. "Well, let's face this thing."

The hotel appeared to be more than half empty. There were no tourists waiting in strange garments for the arrival of the lift. The one-armed man who wore the Croix de Guerre glanced at them with obvious approval. He was almost inclined to believe that they were French. The smartly dressed clerk, who wore his inevitable buttonhole in a black coat, rose from his desk and bowed as they passed. The name of Farquhar, which he was quite unable to pronounce, was very well known to him. In addition to which the Duchesse de Bercy had impressed upon him the necessity of paying her relations the greatest attention. He, too, glanced at Helen with marked approval. He said to himself with a smile of national pride, "Madame may come from America but she dresses in Paris."

Farquhar handed his wife into a glistening Renault and they were driven French swiftness through what is perhaps the most beautiful quarter of that most beautiful city. Spring had touched the trees with her fingers and the clear light had not yet begun to fade. In spite of the falling franc and underlying panic, and the indescribable chaos and defeatism of all political factions, life went on as usual. Under the trees in the Champs Elysees children played, or sat in excited rows listening to the age-old domestic quarrels of Punch and Judy. The Marigny glistened whitely between the trees and innumerable cars purred on their way to and fro along the polished road.

There must have been at least a hundred cars ranged up outside the de Bercy with history all over its face.

"What did she say?" asked Farquhar. "A little gath-

ering? Why, good Lord, this is a function. Everybody's here."

"Yes," said Helen. "It looks like one of my parties, doesn't it?" and she showed her beautiful teeth.

The door of the house was open. There were as many footmen in the foyer as may be found in a motion picture of fashionable life in Hollywood. A grave man, who looked like a Deputy, led them up the wide staircase. The drawing-room was so crowded with women that it was impossible to get in. The absolute stillness of the room was broken by the notes of a piano. Rising on his toes Farquhar could see the slight, well-waisted, figure of a young man seated at the instrument at the far end of the room. Bent a little forward, he was playing like one in a dream. His power was amazing, his tone as clear as a bell, and his technique so faultless, so perfect, that it would almost have been mechanical had it not been for a feeling of poetry which gave it the human touch.

Farquhar listened with bated breath. He found himself strangely stirred. He was hardly able to do more than make a mental note of the fact that the player's face was the handsomest of its kind that he had ever seen. As white as alabaster, delicate, mediæval; hair black and thick, and a little too long, so that it fell forward in a sort of fringe; hands long, thin, supple and commanding.

When the music came to an end he found himself joining in the almost wild applause of that crowded audience. He was not in the least surprised when all the women about him uttered little noises of ecstasy. During all this tumult the musician sat erect, unmoved, with his hands on the notes. He might have been sitting to a sculptor as the aloof and elusive figure of Thought. And it was

not until silence fell once more upon that room that, after a preliminary wander over the keys, he went into one of Chopin's Preludes with the most exquisite understanding of that Master's mood.

In the somewhat dim light Farquhar could see two familiar figures sitting side by side on a sofa with its back to a heavily curtained window. One was graceful, sophisticated, no longer young, beautifully dressed; the other that of a slip of a girl, with a boyish head, an ecstatic expression on her lovely face and her hands clasped round her knee. One was the Duchesse de Bercy and the other was Jean.

He turned towards Helen. He saw that she, too, had found her daughter in that crowd. Her lips were trembling, and there were tears in her eyes. He put his hand on her arm and his mouth to her ear. "No wonder she's in love with that boy," he said in a whisper. "He *is* the new Paderewski. He has genius. And my God, what a face. Is this to go through? Are we beaten?"

Helen's eyes remained for a moment on the musician, and they were filled with admiration. But when she turned her head and looked at her husband her lips tightened, her shoulders squared, and she shook her head. She said nothing aloud or even an undertone. She was afraid of being hushed down. But he saw that her lips formed the words, "It's impossible. He is a Jew."

PART VI

I

THE extempore recital in the house of the Duchesse came to an end when Max Lorbenstein rose from the piano suddenly and, without taking the slightest notice of feminine hysteria and adulation, swept back his fringe of hair with both his hands and left the room, asking for water. Whereupon, seeing no chance of basking in reflected glory by crowding round the star, but delighted to have received something for nothing in the usual Society way, the women, who represented "all Paris," instantly made for the street. There was nothing more to get. Why wait? Why stay long enough even to murmur au revoir and offer thanks to the Duchesse for providing them with this treat? Life called. Let's get on with it.

There was a jostle and scrum on the staircase; a competition, almost a championship, for a first place under the portico. Cars rolled up in quick succession and their doors were opened and slammed. There were high pitched voices, scattered laughs, a trail of scent, dictatorial honking, and silence eventually.

In an incredibly short space of time Farquhar and

Helen found themselves in a room that was deserted except by several footmen, who had set about removing the superfluous chairs,—and Jean.

Farquhar looked at his wife. He felt strangely excited and, in spite of the gravity of the situation, grimly amused. It was on account of Jean and her problem that he had travelled from Italy to England, from England to America, from America to England and from England to France. In order to see this girl, this child, this baby, he had covered something like seven thousand miles in, roughly speaking, five weeks, deviating from the path of his own desires for the second time in his life. Amused? That was hardly the word.

"Jean, at last," he said.

Helen laid a restraining hand on his arm. He was astonished to see that she had adopted her New York manner again,—the glitter, the flippancy, and the old mechanical smile.

"Strategy," she said, giving him the explanation she could see that he required. "We must be perfectly casual. We must approach this thing with the utmost tact and cunning. It will be fatal to say or do anything that will give Jean the chance to put on the martyr's wreath. Do you see?"

"I see," he said. "But—what are we doing here?"

"I'm in Paris for the usual annual reason,—clothes."

"And I?"

"Not so easy. Er—suppose we say that you've grown to dislike me a little less and have graciously seen me over?"

"That will do," he said. Was she unable, even at such a moment, to refrain from being "clever"?

"I'm sorry," she added immediately. "Habit's so damnably strong." Something round his mouth had told her that her shaft had gone under his skin.

He bowed in his old-fashioned way.

"Can you do it? Have you ever acted before?" she asked.

"No, never. But I'll follow your lead. I think you're on the right track."

She whipped out her powder box, did quick things to her face and drew in her breath with a catch.

"All right, then—shoot," she said.

A little in advance of her husband she sailed across that typically stiff Parisian room to the sofa by the window. On this Jean was sitting in a sort of melodic coma, with her hands clasped round knees. She was wearing one of the frocks which had been supervised by her mother, and the virginal string of pearls that she had received on Christmas morning from her father in Italy. In all outward respects she was the same Park Avenue Jean, as clear and cool as a new moon, though nothing like as shy. To her powerless parents it was immediately obvious that inwardly she had changed. This astonishing thing was clear from the fact that she had remained in one attitude, sitting, for twenty minutes at least.

With a superb simulation of ordinariness Helen bent down and touched the girl's cheek with her lips. "He plays very well," she said. "Amazingly. But don't you want some air? The room's rather stuffy, I think."

And after a moment, after making a sort of flying circle, Jean came down to earth. She looked up at her mother as though she had sat on her bed that morning and

joined her at lunch. "Is it, Mumsie," she said. "Yes, I suppose it is."

Then she looked up and saw that all those women had fled. And she laughed. "The barnyard's empty," she said.

She saw her father. He was standing in what he took to be a casual attitude, though behind his smiling eyes there was an astonishment, a depression, a tragic sense of not belonging that was heavy on his soul.

She waved her hand.

"We're dining here tonight," said Helen. "I think we ought to go back and change. What are you doing, my dear?"

"Let me see," said Jean. "Oh yes, I know. We're having dinner with Serté, the artist. He's one of Max's friends."

Helen laughed,—her old Park Avenue laugh. "Don't you think you might introduce me to your fiancé?" she said. "I'm in the mood for a thrill."

"What a joke. You don't know Max? I'd forgotten that. He's probably drinking water,—pints of it. He always does after playing. I'll go and see where he is."

She sprang to her feet, and without the slightest realization of the fact that her father and mother had come all that way to see her, touched her mother's cheek with her finger, straightened her father's tie and danced gaily out of the room.

There followed a moment in the lives of Farquhar and Helen during which the whole of their past came up and swept over them like a tidal wave. A loveless marriage, a totally indifferent child . . .

With her eyes shut Helen sat rigid. She didn't count any longer. She had been dropped.

As for Farquhar, the man who had acquired anxiety, he was quite unable to speak. He felt like a man in a parachute dropping from a balloon. He meant no more to his daughter than a chance acquaintance, the father of one of the boys with whom she danced. An old bird, useful if he had money and was indulgent and got quickly out of the way. He ought, perhaps, to feel rather flattered to have been recognized.

It said something in favour of his short apprenticeship to unselfishness that he was able at that moment to put his hand on his wife's and say "I'm frightfully sorry." And when Helen seized it and held it with the grip of a drowning woman, to be sufficiently humble to ask himself if there were any hope, by the grace of God, that he and his wife might make up to each other for the desertion of this child.

But when the Duchesse de Bercy returned from looking graciously after the wants of her afternoon lion,—the black-haired lion among ladies,—she found two perfectly composed and conventional people. They had the frozen faces that belong to the civilized world.

"He is most wonderful, this Lorbenstein. A charming man. A musician of the highest flight. It was my wish that you should meet him now, but he has gone. He and your Jean are in Bohemia tonight but they have promised me to come in after dinner. He will escort her home."

"Yes but,—don't we—aren't we to see Jean again for a moment before she . . ." Farquhar found himself stammering.

"Oh no, no, no! My dear, when and where Lorbenstein goes Jean goes. They have disappeared together."

Helen broke the pause with her high light voice. "You dine at eight?"

"Less a quarter, *cherie*. I am early here. I bridge. Afterwards we will talk. You have decided on a plan of action?"

Helen shrugged her shoulders. She had only been in Paris for a few hours but she was already French.

And so Farquhar answered the question. "Yes, we have a sort of plan, but I doubt if it will work. We appear to have died several weeks ago and to be wandering about like ghosts."

The Duchesse raised her eyebrows and stretched out both her hands. "Canute sat in front of the waves, saying to them 'Back.' But all the same they came on. The sea is like the young . . . I do not know. Sometimes I say 'Hail Mary' in gratitude to the fact that I am childless. And yet again, at other times . . ."

And once more she raised her eyebrows and stretched out both her hands.

At the other end of the room a man disappeared with the last of the golden chairs.

II

The Duc de Bercy dined at home that night.

He was a strange man; not quite, it is to be hoped, typically French. He was tall and thin, with a large, fine nose, lantern jaws, wiry eyebrows and tufts that came out of his ears. His eyes were narrow, brown, and

keenly observant. They missed nothing. He took no exercise, and was, as a natural result, anæmic, dyspeptic, and quick tempered. It was his proud boast that never in his life had he done more than walk to the door of his house, drive to wherever he had made up his mind to go and then walk from the carriage or car to the nearest comfortable chair. His head was entirely hairless, except for a fringe which was geometrically parted at the back and brushed round over his ears. He took great pride in his baldness and his dome was polished by his valet. He had a special barber for his moustache, which required daily attention. It was what he called a Stuart moustache, because it was shaved down from the nose and upwards from the lip. It was dyed a raven black. There was a small tuft under his lower lip which he caressed with very long fingers in moments of contemplation. He was excessively well-dressed and set the fashion in Paris.

It was his habit before the war to speak English from time to time, but since the Treaty of Versailles he had never spoken a word nor allowed it to be spoken in his hearing. He was one of those numerous Frenchmen who hold that the Allies had done nothing to help France win the war, and he regarded most of the subsequent troubles as the result of the perfidy of Albion. He was a Royalist, and if he ever prayed, which is doubtful, it was that his beloved France might see a King again.

He rose at twelve o'clock, enjoyed a light meal in his room and proceeded to his Club. There he played bridge until it was time to dress for dinner. He dined at home, returned to his Club, and played écarté until precisely one o'clock in the morning. A sleepy and unconsidered chauffeur drove him to his house. He was received by

his major domo, toyed with a bottle of champagne, a few delicious sandwiches and his last cigar. At three he went to his room, spent half an hour with his favourite prints, which he kept in portfolios, and then was put to bed. He prided himself upon saying no more than the fewest number of words. Upon leaving Paris once a year for a month he drank the waters at Vichy. He kept a most minute diary and his entries consisted mainly of his winnings and losses at cards. Now and then he reported a conversation with a friend, or rather with an acquaintance,—he had no friends,—and sometimes, when the spirit moved him, he sat down in the most sarcastic words his opinion of the world's politicians. He had a great respect for his wife.

Knowing the eccentricity of the Duc Helen and Farquhar spoke French. The dinner was a very uncomfortable business, punctuated with pauses and served in a room that was as formal as the host. The Duc was cold to his guests. He looked upon America as the enemy of Europe, and, even more than England, the enemy of France. It was his fixed idea that the frightful fluctuations of the franc were due entirely to what was called in Europe the Shylockism of Washington. He had been heard to say that instead of France's being in debt to America, America owed to France the whole of the cost of the war. It was the rooted French opinion that America had been saved from Germany by four years blood and sacrifice.

At nine o'clock he rose to take his leave. Nothing except death, or the sort of illness that kept him in his bed, could prevent his seating himself at the écarté table at precisely half-past nine. He placed his thin lips on

his wife's hand, bowed coldly to her relations, left the room with rapping heels, was helped into one or other of his numerous overcoats by one servant, took his hat and stick from another, and proceeded to his car. In this he smoked his fifth cigar through a special cherrywood holder.

Everybody sighed with relief, including Madame la Duchesse de Bercy, who said, with a curious curl of her lips, "A wonderful . . . I was going to say man, but that would not be true. At any rate, for me, a wonderful husband. I say for me because it was desired that I should bear his name, and, like a girl in a shop, have my evenings off." She gave one of her silent laughs. "I think it would be more pleasant," she added, "if we drank coffee in my room. We shall be uninterrupted for our discussion of the affair of Jean."

She rose, tall, slight and thoroughbred, amazingly well preserved, beautifully dressed. She led the way to the door and stood back for Helen to pass. The French and American aristocrats made their way slowly up the wide staircases, arm in arm. Helen's frock, though made in Paris by Tao, was shorter and more girlish than that of her relation, who did not conform to American standardization and never permitted herself to imitate other women. She wore, ate, thought and spoke precisely what she liked. In her hobbies she was equally original. She feared neither gossip nor the Press.

Farquhar followed them. And as he did so he said to himself, "Poor swine . . . old, old! A few years ago I would no more have subjected myself to such a dinner or to following on the heels of these two women than have been on the books of a lunatic asylum."

He felt like a racehorse in the shafts of a cab.

There was less stiffness and formality in the Duchesse's room. The furniture was not French, nor were the pictures. It was, in fact, the only easy and comfortable room in the house,—the sort of room in which a man might smoke a pipe. And it was here, over coffee and a most excellent assortment of liqueurs, that these three strangely detached people devoted a considerable time to "the problem."

Standing in his usual attitude, but without his friendly pipe, Farquhar began by refreshing the Duchesse's mind on the point of the enormous importance that must be attached to the question of whom Jean married. In simple but incisive words he talked about caste and position, wealth and dignity. Jean was one of the great heiresses of the United States. Her name was an old one, free from the vaguest suggestion of scandal. It was one about which both he and his wife were very jealous and proud. They had themselves done nothing, however strongly tempted, to damage its prestige. It was their plan that the man who married Jean should add that name to his own, in order, as there was no son, that he might carry it on. They had chosen a man in whom they believed, and there had been an engagement.

He pointed out, with illustrations, the deep-rooted prejudice which existed in American society against the Jewish people. The mere idea of handing on the Farquhar name and traditions to a full blooded Hebrew, however talented and charming he might be, was not to be considered. It was impossible and absurd. Even under such a cloak he would not be received into a single exclusive house. He, and with him Jean, would be

relegated to semi-society, musical and theatrical circles and careless Bohemia. The door of every self-respecting Club would be bolted and barred.

"It would be a disaster," he said finally. "We should be traitors to the family if we allowed it to go through."

To all of which the Duchesse listened with the greatest attention and interest,—and finally with surprise. She lit one cigarette from another and appeared to inhale them all.

"What is the matter with the United States?" she asked, when Farquhar came to an end. "Why do you people cling to those strangely old fashioned ideas? I do not know if it is true but it is generally said that in New York, for example, every fifth man is a Jew. Indeed, I have heard America called 'our Jewnited States.' In London, for a long time, and more recently in Paris, most of us have ruled out this racial prejudice. Barriers are gone. Here, I suppose, they were swept away by the War. The need of money, perhaps. All is different now. Race and religion count no longer. A man is judged and accepted on what he is and does. We do not take the trouble to look at the shape of his nose, or discover in which of the many ways it is his habit to worship God. We are not concerned. Integrity, brilliance, cultivation, fastidiousness, pride and power,—especially power . . . if a man has them, that is all. Of course there are those in France, the belated, but very few, who cling to pre-war prejudice and are anti- This and That, just as they are against one politician and another. It is the French characteristic to be 'against.' And in England perhaps, a few,—the middle class. What I have heard called the 'also rans.' But with us, the aristocracy . . . Oh, my

dears, can you not ask America to grow up to the times, to ride herself of naïveté, to be more confident? This Lorbenstein, as I have seen for myself, is a gentleman. He is the son, as I hear, of a remarkable old man, the genius of finance, who lives a fine and simple life among a gallery of art. He has a feeling for beauty and is a philanthropist. I have read of his giving away such sums as would put our poor franc on its feet once more. Is it that you ask me to believe your America will cling to a prejudice so unfair against one of whom several old countries would be proud? If it is so then truly it is for you, the Farquhars, to make an alteration, to effect a change. It is your chance. I will ask you to meet this Max with open minds, with unjaundiced eyes. I warn you that there is love in this. If ever you have met two young people so delightfully, so refreshingly and so wonderfully in love as your dear Jean and this,—I had almost said,—transmigration of a great soul, it is more than I have done."

First Warminster, the Diehard, and then the Duchesse de Bercy, the leader of French society. Europe versus America.

It remained for Farquhar to say, "Nevertheless, it's quite impossible. I may agree with you privately that our racial prejudice in this respect is cruel and out of date, but it exists, and we must conform. Either we succeed in smashing this engagement,—God knows how,—or Jean must be numbered among expatriated Americans and that's the end of it."

The Duchesse waved her long cigarette holder. "Very well," she said. "What do you propose? How are you going to proceed with a child who has taken her life into

her own hands and will no more think of asking your permission to carry out her intentions than fly to the moon and stars? It is difficult, my friends."

Then Helen took it up. "Erskine and I have agreed," she said,—"we are accustomed to agreeing,—to play a careful hand. We're going to accept this engagement outwardly without a murmur of disapproval. It's perfectly obvious that Jean would be amazed at any opposition and would completely ignore it if we put it up. She's out of our reach and control. And so we're going to be strategic as a first step."

"And then?"

"We've got no further than that. Driving here in your car I said to Erskine, 'It seems to me that our second step is, somehow or other, to cajole Jean into coming home with this boy. Then to announce the engagement and let her be buried under the avalanche of horrifying publicity which will fall upon our heads.' Not from us, but from her friends, must come disapproval and appeals so that she will find out at once what her future is going to be. A feeble idea, do you think?"

The Duchesse gave it a moment of intensive thought. "No," she said. "From your point of view that seems to be good strategy. But suppose,—and this I think is very possible,—these two are married in Paris tomorrow or the next day or one day soon. What then? It is clear to me, *ma cherie,* that your Jean is not wholly content merely to listen to this man's music. I can see this in her eyes. Max can wait. A man can always wait. He enjoys the dallying, the spirit of the chase. But a girl in such a mood, in such a stress, never. Never, I know it . . . Listen."

They heard laughter, and the ring of voices. More laughter, and then, in the room below, the room in which all Paris had crowded that afternoon without payment, to be stirred, thrilled and enthralled, the opening bars of the third movement of Stravinsky's "Petrouchka," played with a master's touch.

III

And so they waited, listening, Farquhar with a tremendous resentment and impatience,—Helen with a peculiar surprise and the indescribable sensation of finding herself in a new dimension, and the Duchesse, who congratulated herself on being a bystander, a mere watcher on the fringe of this trouble, with a rather enjoyable excitement. As one who had read plays and watched them, been concerned in many moments of artificial comedy and genuine emotion, she was intrigued to see what would happen when these perplexed and bewildered parents came face to face for the first time with the leading man in their domestic drama.

She told herself that Jean must know that her father and mother were somewhere in the house. Indeed she had left a message with the butler to inform her of the fact. As minute after minute went by, until half an hour had gone, the selfishness and total indifference of the modern daughter was demonstrated to her.

After Stravinsky came Bach, Schumann and Mozart, and these were followed by an absurd clash of notes, as though someone had sat on the keys. And then laughter, voices, a rush of feet and the opening of the door.

With the most perfect ease and unselfconsciousness this Lorbenstein entered the room. He was still in the tailcoat, the black trousers with a white stripe, the patent shoes and white spats in which he had appeared at the more or less impromptu function of the afternoon. The gardenia in his buttonhole was still fresh and his pepper and salt bow tie still in the most perfect shape over the wings of his collar. But for his slightly too long hair, black and thick and wavy, he might quite well have been in the Diplomatic Service, the son and heir of a Marquis, or possibly a Spanish Duke.

His manner was quiet, composed, and courteous. There was in it even a slight touch of patronage,—though it was hardly that. It might be better described as that of a young royal person unbending in the house of one of his father's friends. And though his profile was distinctly Hebraic, it was, as Helen immediately said to herself with fright, ethereal and fine. She had seen such a face on the body of one of the figures in the frescoes of the Pitti Palace, in the pictures of Botticelli, on the walls of St. Marco. Given a monk's robe this boy might have stood for a young Franciscan whose eyes burned with the latent fire, enthusiasm and spirituality of one devoted to a cause, an inspiration, a revival.

He made way for Jean with an air of possession, a tender solicitous air in which there was pride. He came forward with unstudied grace, bowed to the Duchesse and raised her hand to his lips.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said, "I'm afraid we've kept you waiting. The sight of a piano is always too much for me."

And while he spoke, Jean, not with her usual bound,

but quietly and like a woman of the world, joined her mother, kissed her, and said, "Hullo Mumsie. I wish you had been with us tonight. It was just the sort of dinner that you would have enjoyed."

And then she turned to her father and held up her face.

With a tremendous effort Farquhar controlled himself. He wanted to take this child in his arms and hold her tight, protect her, effect a rescue, and carry her off to a quiet place in which, with patient argument and tenderness, he could wean her away from the hypnotic attraction of this unusual man. But the crushing realization of his utter lack of influence, because he had never gone out of his way to win her confidence and love, held him back. Then too, he had been instructed to act, to hide his feelings behind a totally unpractised art. He had agreed to this and carried out his agreements.

And so he said, lightly, "A pretty frock, old thing," and put his lips to her hair.

In her best manner, though with watchful eyes, the Duchesse de Bercy called the attention of the Lorbenstein to her guests. She said, "I desire to present you to my dear relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar, who are the parents of Jean."

Whereupon the boy held out his hand to Helen with a frank gesture. "How splendid," he said. "I didn't think I should have this pleasure until I could tear myself away from Paris to spend a few weeks in New York."

He might have been a Frenchman who had been educated at Harrow or Winchester.

Helen's cordiality was warm. It was an achievement. She wanted to say, "It isn't a pleasure to me. I would give everything I possess never to have had to meet you."

If actors were trained in society how much better they would act.

Max then turned to Farquhar with a very friendly smile. "How do you do?" he asked.

There was nothing in his manner to show that he was impressed by the fact that this good-looking, athletic man and polished graceful woman had more to do with his future wife than any of the numerous people who passed through his daily life. Jean and he were sufficient unto themselves. They owned the world.

Farquhar shook hands like a Brigadier-General receiving a war correspondent.

It was a conventional pleasant moment in which there was not a suggestion of the drama to which the Duchesse had looked forward with eager anticipation. It made things far more difficult than they had ever been.

If this man had been an ill-bred Jew, inherently vulgar under a smart veneer, there might have been a hope of good results in the continuance of Helen's plan. Left unbrowbeaten and undisturbed there might have been a chance that Jean, recovering gradually from her blind infatuation, would have discovered in him certain ungainlinesses of mind and body, tricks of speech which would have disgusted her, or, at any rate, jarred her nerves. If, for instance, in spite of his face and genius, he had been a man who had worked his way into the musical profession from illiterate beginnings and the corner of a slum, glamour might have died under the eventual sense of shock. As it was there was no other word for him than that of gentleman. He was gentle and he was a man. It was noticed immediately by Farquhar and his wife that he was utterly and absolutely devoid of the inferiority complex

which the members of his race in America have been forced to suffer from. They saw at once that, on the contrary, he was without any remote consciousness of race or faith; that he regarded himself as a cosmopolitan, able, because of education, ability and money, to go where he liked, to do what he liked, and associate with whom he liked; that he was, in a word, confident, though strangely unconceited in the face of adulation.

Helen's fright spread to Farquhar,—especially as he found himself, as he could see that she did, under the spell of a personality so natural and attractive. He liked the way in which the young man held himself and wore his clothes. He liked his voice and the fact that his English was as good as his French. He liked his witty description of the dinner party in the Serté studio, and his good natured summary of the bizarre atmosphere in which his friend lived and did his peculiar but admirable work, drawing strange women with star-like eyes, and pansy mouths, against a background of fantastic moons and constellations, while he mixed daring colours with the originality of a futurist who was possessed with a sense of beauty. He was amused by the delightful way in which he caricatured the little gang who worshipped at the Serté shrine, the intelligentsia of Paris, the boyish girls and the girlish boys, poets, painters, playwrights, journalists, professional dancers, sculptors who thought it smart to make their men and women look like lunatics or abortions, and the dreadful little clever people who eked out a sort of living by the parasitical process of criticism, themselves being unable to create.

All through this, as Farquhar and Helen saw with the creeping paralysis of discouragement and fear, Jean

hung upon his words, laughed at his character sketches, and watched his every movement with a passion that needed only to be lit. The boy didn't usurp the conversation. He played ball with the Duchesse, who fed him as a professional feeds an excellent player at tennis. It was her intention to show him off, to let him display, so to speak, his admirable strokes, the artfulness of his placing and his crushing returns.

It was a strange hour.

Farquhar and Helen rose to go with a feeling that instead of having turned down their thumbs on Lorbenstein they had been graciously accepted by him. They were not in the least surprised that Jean had fallen a victim. And it was Helen, in one of her sudden moments of frankness, when her fourth wall fell with a crash, who said under her breath to Farquhar, "If I were ten years younger I should collect that boy myself."

They were seen to the door by Jean, who was followed closely by Max. He didn't appear to be able to let her out of his sight. With one arm round Helen's shoulder and the other on Farquhar's arm she kept them beneath a statue of Apollo for a few last words.

She said, "Do you know, Mumsie, I'm beginning to know Paris as though I belonged to the place. Even in this short time I have discovered a hundred things that tourists never find. Max has lived here for years. This has been his headquarters and already he has taken me into its inner life. It's frightfully amusing and different. Come with us now and then. But, of course, father knows it backwards and has probably been in love with many French women during his giddy past."

"No, I haven't," said Farquhar. "They don't like me. I'm too stiff and unresilient and not very keen on late nights. But I do know Paris as you're beginning to know it, because I was here as a boy." He wanted to add, "But I have never deliberately hunted after the weird set into which you were taken tonight."

But he didn't,—both because he had no desire to hurt young Lorbenstein's feelings or go back on his definite agreement with his wife. He was not a Jew or a genius. He was not a man with a face such as one saw in the pictures of Botticelli. He was merely Farquhar, Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar, an anxious and bewildered man who had never hitherto seriously attempted to achieve the respect and loyalty of his only child and knew that he never could.

"It's rather late," said Helen. "Will someone call a taxi?" She would have given all the affairs, excitements and Society triumphs that she had ever enjoyed to have been able to take her girl home with her that night and recover her love.

"Oh, no, please," said Lorbenstein. "I'll drive you home, of course. And, by the way, my car's entirely at your disposal while you remain in Paris, if you care to make use of it."

"Thanks so much," said Farquhar. "If we stay, which isn't likely, we shall get a car."

He drew back when Max turned to Jean to say good-night. He felt almost hideously *de trop*. And when his daughter sprang forward and put her arms round the boy's neck with an air of possessive right he said to himself, "It's over. We're beaten from the start."

And the first words that Helen spoke to him when they were alone at the hotel were, "It would be inhuman even to attempt to break this up. They are wonderfully in love, poor dears."

IV

The following morning at ten o'clock, not many minutes after Farquhar had returned from a matutinal prowl round the Bois, Jean walked into the sittingroom with a song on her lips.

Helen was in her room. She had no intention of hitching herself to life again until twelve o'clock. She and her husband had stayed up so late the previous night that even Paris was sleeping before they had gone to their rooms.

"Good morning," she said. "I thought it might be rather fun to potter round and join you at coffee,—unless, of course, you have had it."

She presented her cheek to him. It might have been a healthy cheek. It was impossible to be sure of that because it was covered with powder.

Farquhar did what was expected of him without much show of affection. She had made it very plain that his rôle was that of uncle,—a newish uncle who had spent most of his time abroad.

"I've been exercising," he said. "The torso's my obsession and the waist-line has to be watched. Coffee and brioches are on their way. And I wouldn't be surprised if they threw in marmalade."

"That's good news. I hate that awful peach jam that

usually comes with breakfast. You're an early bird! Do you usually go forth and march about at this hour of the morning? I have to ask because I don't know your little ways."

Many women knew his idiosyncrasies better than his wife and daughter.

"It's frightfully sweet of you to honour me with your presence. You're an early bird yourself."

He felt appallingly like a man who was talking over a wall to a next door neighbour's daughter.

She laughed.

"Oh, I've been up since six,—riding with Max in the Park. I wish you could see how comic he is on a horse. He must have exercise though. That's my job. Until I came along he spent his days sitting at the piano and smoking tons of cigarettes,—a most unhealthy life. He's far too valuable to the world to be permitted to cultivate a shaky hand and go off with a bang."

"You're a philanthropist, I see."

Jean accepted the description.

"Well," she said, making herself perfectly comfortable, "the wife of a musician must either be that or nothing,—and a bit of a nurse as well. Max never thinks of himself. He's the abject slave of music. In the old bad days it appears that he practised for hours at a time,—often far into the night. If his servants brought in lunch he never ate it and I don't believe he would ever have got any dinner unless one or other of his friends had dragged him out. He told me the other day that he used to sit at the piano until he fell asleep on the keys. All that's going to be changed."

She made this final statement with a quiet determination that was amusing in one so young. And then, taking it for granted that Farquhar was as much interested in Max as the swarms who rushed to hear him, she went into minute details as to her plans for the protection of his health. She had decided on a régime of work and relaxation. She had thought out a daily diet after a close study of a dozen doctors' books. He was, in future, to sleep at least—*at least*—eight hours, ride and play tennis, and walk five miles a day. You see, his life was precious. He was becoming an international institution. He had it in his power to do more for tired people than almost any man alive. As his wife she would be in a position of public trust, of course. It would be her duty and her joy to train herself into a whole committee of preservation.

"You see all that, of course?"

"I see it all," he said.

So this intensely serious little person was actually the Jean whom he had seen during his visit to Park Avenue rushing from dance to dance and going from one invitation to another with the most utter brainlessness! Good heavens, what a change. She was no longer the giddy child at the mercy of wind and tide, swept continually into the vortex and whirled about like a twig. A sense of responsibility had made her find herself. She had outgrown flapperism with all its jerkiness. She was no longer the rather silly lollipop whose mouth had been full of the latest slang, whose one idea had been to achieve a successful "line," who had stood in attitudes of deliberate awkwardness, barged about rooms like a bull in a china shop, talked too loudly about nothing, laughed

without provocation, and waved her legs about. She had become a woman. She was thinking. She could sit. She had the beginnings of dignity. Growing pains had ceased. She had developed into a person. She had separated herself from all the little tadpoles of her set, every one of whom was precisely similar in dress, make-up, manner, the stereotyped assumption of stupidity,—the smart little Robots, heartless, soulless, affected only by jazz. Had this amazing *volte face* taken place in so short a time merely under the influence of the maternal instinct? What a wonderful thing it must be.

The waiter came in with a tray. It was easy to see that he was English before one heard his French. He clung with British tenacity to the donkey driver's twist, that peculiar way of wetting the hair and brushing it up in front. Then, too, he was cheerful and polite, deft and considerate, and placed the morning papers right side up. A Frenchman never did that. He glanced at Farquhar with approval and respect, recognizing in him a man who had commanded men, one to whom he had waggled his hand behind his ear in and about the trenches of the country in which now, by the grace of God, he was earning an honest living and duly saving his tips. There might be a time when he would be able to return to his native Shoreditch and conduct a winkle barrow, or buy "The Jolly Farmer" under the Surrey Hills.

Farquhar said "Morning" in English. He had an observant eye. And he added, "Ah, I see that you've brought some marmalade. Good old squish."

He was rewarded for this human touch by a grin which showed bad teeth.

This episode, though quickly over, warmed Jean to-

wards her father. She had made up her mind that he was an aloof and selfish person with an exceedingly mottled past.

"*I* didn't know he was an Englishman," she said. "How did you?"

"I met scores of 'em during the war. They were the men who did things, played football behind the lines, talked about 'good old Bosch,' and carried on through mud and slime with constant grumbles, constant humour, and inimitable pluck."

Jean dismissed the subject. Her thoughts were full of Max. "It's rather jolly that you and Mumsie have turned up just now," she said.

"Oh," said Farquhar. "Why?"

"Well, don't you think that having a father and mother in church when one's married gives the affair a tone?"

"I suppose it does," said Farquhar, steadying his voice. "What church and when?"

"Any old church," said Jean. "I haven't thought about that."

"A tabernacle?"

"Yes, probably," she said, "or a Roman Catholic church. Or we may be able to find something Episcopalian if we look. It doesn't matter to me, and, of course, it won't matter a bit to Max."

Farquhar went to the table and felt the coffee pot. "Won't it? How do you know?"

"I don't know. I've never discussed the point. But, of course, if there are any technical questions there's always the Notary's office. I should rather prefer to be married in a church, with bells and an organ, flowers and bridesmaids. It'll only happen once."

"Exactly when do you intend to do this thing?"

"That's not decided either. I should think one day next week."

"I see," said Farquhar. "Well. How do you like your coffee? Half and half?"

"Yes please," she said, "and several lumps of sugar."

"Two, to be exact?"

He filled her cup with an unsteady hand. Permission or consultation? Odd words those today. Well, there it was. There was nothing to be done.

She nodded and gave him a smile. He was a much nicer man in Paris than he had ever been in New York. So friendly, so easy to get on with. Not a bit like a father, she thought.

The suite, after all, was small, and whether the voices in the sittingroom had disturbed his wife, or not, the fact remained that Helen was up and dressed. Her usual quota of sleep, of which she made a fetish, was not permitted to run its course. She disturbed this peculiar interview while the coffee was hot.

"Oh, hullo, you two," she said, as if nothing were more natural than to find them in that room. "Is there a cup for me?"

"Of course. Have mine," said Farquhar. "I'll ring the bell for another."

Touching Jean's hair with her lips Helen drew up to the table and accepted her husband's cup. They might all three have been in the breakfast room in Park Avenue in the pre-desertion days but for an expression of strain and sleeplessness on Helen's face which had never been worn in New York. She darted a quick look at Farquhar

from which he gathered that she had overheard the conversation.

Helen,—listening at keyholes! That was something new.

"Any news?" she asked, taking a brioche.

And Farquhar said, "No, I don't think so,—unless the franc's gone down again."

"There's a little sun for a change." She added mentally, with growing respect, "No wonder our house has been free from reporters. This man sticks to the rules."

Jean took up the threads. "Max wanted me to ask you if you would lunch with us today. He's dying to show you our house. It's not by any means finished yet, but he's going to leave that to me. He's really only bothered with the music room and the hall. The rest of the place, and especially his bedroom, is a most frightful mess. Pictures and furniture everywhere and nothing properly arranged. Wait until I begin."

Her eyes sparkled. Happiness had crowned her with a halo.

Helen hauled at a mental rein. "You'll spend a good deal of time in Paris, I suppose?"

"I think we shall," said Jean. "Max loves it, you see."

"Shall you ever come to New York?"

"Oh yes! We're going across in November. Max has been asked to sign a contract for a series of concerts. He hasn't played there yet. Rather exciting for you to introduce him, Mumsie, at one of your tremendous orgies. You'll like doing that, I know."

"Enormously," said Helen, "and it will give the thing

an added flavour when it's announced that you're his wife."

She said this without a trace of sarcasm. It wouldn't have been wise. But she was extremely glad when the telephone bell called her from the table. There was anger in her eyes.

Farquhar unfolded the *Daily Mail* and handed the Paris Edition of the *New York Herald* to Jean.

"I loathe conversations over that wretched instrument," he said. "Concentrate on the news."

Jean laughed. "Mother's social instincts never let her choke people off. She'll be ten minutes at least."

There were the usual exuberant greetings, interrupted sentences, "No—Yes—You don't say so—Well, well, well." . . . "It's Dorothy Hunter," said Helen, over her shoulder, making a mouth.

"Who the deuce is Dorothy Hunter?"

"The woman who's got our house," said Jean.

"Oh . . . Ask her to hurry up with that divorce of hers. I can't stand this hotel."

On went Helen.

And as she did so Farquhar was drawn from his attempt to master even as much as the headlines and sat with his eyes on Jean. Here was the first American reaction to her calm and complete indifference to its most rigid social law. What would she say to it?

"Yes, yesterday . . . But, my dear, how could I? I didn't know I was crossing until the last minute, you see . . . No, no, of course not. We're very comfortable here . . . Yes, it *is* true. Jean has been regularly engaged to Max Lorbenstein for several days. Isn't it wonderful?

. . . What? What did you say? Certainly they're going to be married . . . Does that matter? Yes, but there are Jews and Jews . . . Oh, I know, but all that's breaking down . . . Pariah dog? Oh nonsense! . . . Well, who wants to belong to the Clubs? Jean doesn't care . . . Expatriate? Well, there are plenty of others . . . Why are you so astonished? . . . Well then, come and see."

She laughed, and said goodbye.

"What was all that?" asked Jean. "Half a cup please, father."

Resuming her place at the table, with an excited glance at her husband, Helen took a spoonful of marmalade. She said as quietly as she could, "Dorothy's on the verge of a collapse. She refused to believe the rumour about Jean's engagement, and when I told her that it was true, and scoffed at her horrified references to social suicide, she talked about my being in instant need of a brain specialist."

What Jean said was simply, "Silly woman". Whereupon she rose and pushed back her chair. "I promised Max to rush back as soon as I could. I must be pushing off. So long, Mumsie. Turn up at one o'clock. 21 Avenue de Bois de Boulogne. Be good."

And with a wave of the hand she was gone.

V

Farquhar and Helen walked to Max's house.

It was one of those somewhat rare, and, therefore, all the more delicious mornings when Paris wore its Spring clothes and the air was light, cheerful and extraordinarily clear, and as though Nature had made the rounds with a

box of water colours. The sun was warm, and the wide patches of blue in the sky were broken here and there by white festoons of cloud. They might have been placed by an artist, a master of composition. There is no reason to suppose they weren't.

Farquhar was more than depressed. It seemed to him that there was nothing that he or his wife could say or do in order to persuade Jean to look at her engagement with even a momentary detachment, or give the slightest consideration to the fact that, as an American, and as their daughter, she had perpetrated a social solecism of the most disastrous kind.

He said, "You see, her attitude is wholly selfish,—which I suppose is natural under the circumstances. It doesn't occur to her that you and I have come over entirely on her behalf and broken up our plans. She thinks, if she thinks about it at all, and I doubt it, that we're over here in the usual way of amusement, and if we were to explain our real reason it wouldn't make an atom of difference. She called your panicky friend a 'silly woman'. Her name for us would probably be 'funny old things.' "

"Yes," said Helen. "All that's true. Isn't it amazing? Or is it? I don't know. What can one expect? To be perfectly honest you and I have been equally one-eyed all our lives, except when we conformed to the wishes of our parents and made a deplorable mistake. Jean is carrying on in precisely the same old way. This is retaliation, the result of example. We are being paid out in our own coin. That's what it comes to. And all our discussions and efforts lead nowhere and achieve nothing. And the worst of it is,—I mean the worst from our point of view,—that my sympathy is with her. I don't feel suffi-

ciently inhuman,—now that I've seen her with Max,—that most attractive boy—to attempt to smash it up."

"Inhuman is the word," said Farquhar, "because, say what we will, the truth of truths is love. It's what every man and woman hunts for. It's the only thing in life. I don't mind telling you that even if Jean were one of those absolute curiosities of the present time—a perfectly amenable daughter—I should hesitate to stamp on this affair and draw her out of it. It would be like putting a knife through her heart. A ghastly thing to do."

"In the meantime," said Helen, "the news of the engagement is not only all over Paris but London knows it too. We've got to face the fact that perhaps at this very moment it has been cabled to the American papers. Oh, my God, those headlines."

"Um," said Farquhar. "The very things that you and I have been so careful to avoid. Do you believe in God?"

Helen looked up sharply. "I don't know," she said, after a moment's pause. "Why? What if I do?"

Farquhar shrugged his shoulders. "I blurted it out. It was a foolish question. Even if you did, and by so doing, could get some help through prayer, what would be the use? I love this girl. I find that she means very much more to me than caste and social position and all the rest of it. Therefore, if we believe in God, we should be doing the right thing if, instead of working for her unhappiness, we begged that this thing might go through without a hitch."

To which Helen said, "Yes, Jean wins. It's her day. We're done. You and I are going to be made the laughing stocks of New York. It will take us a long time before we shall be able to live down scorn, ridicule and the

outburst in the papers. I don't care. I couldn't sleep last night, and in those unaccustomed hours of wakefulness I discovered that I love Jean far more than I love myself. How funny. What a shock. Yes, I, too, am growing old."

And having made this amazing confession she ran her hand through his arm. They were comrades now. For the rest of the way they walked in silence, in a closer sense of relationship than they had ever known.

A quite conventional servant ushered them into the house. A fine house, with all the dignity of its neighbours. A house in which its ancient owners had lived in the inimitable simplicity which is so essentially French,—that pompous simplicity, so confident, so unselfconscious.

The wide staircase was uncarpeted, but its walls were hung with tapestry. A sedan chair in exquisite repair was standing in the foyer. They were shown into the music room to which Jean had referred with such pride. Whatever might be the chaos of the rest of the house here, at any rate, was order, charm and artistic arrangement. It was the room not only of an artist but a man of fastidious taste. One enormous rug, old and mellow, lay upon the floor. It was a museum piece, as Farquhar noticed immediately. It should have been hanging on a wall. And his eye was caught by a Corot and several other landscapes by Dutch, English and French painters which he would have been extremely delighted to have owned.

The piano, which was open, stood on a sort of dais in the middle of the room. It was the dominating object, as it had the right to be. All about it there were large and comfortable sofas, chairs and little tables, and on these were books, photographs signed by well-known names,

and vases with flowers. The room seemed to quiver with the vibrations of music.

Farquhar and Helen felt as though they were threading their way through a wood. A gay wood of silver birches whose leaves were stirred by gentle breezes and had been touched with the gold of the sun.

The table had been laid in the windows at the further end of the room. They could see Jean's hand, or, at any rate, that of a woman, in its arrangement, in the choice of its cloth, its silver and its glass. It wasn't that of a bachelor, even an artistic bachelor. It wore a domestic look.

At the moment of their arrival Max was sitting on one of the largest sofas with Jean's boyish head on his shoulder. His arm was round her neck, and the long thin fingers of his right hand made a tender cup for her chin. He rose at the announcement and came forward to meet his visitors with the grace of a faun. He wore a suit of blue flannels with a wide white stripe, a blue tie under a soft collar, and brown shoes which had been properly boned. He might have been Balliol or Magdalen, even with that hair. It is the pose of Oxford either to be poetic or a slightly washed-out Red.

Translating his words from French, he said, "This is enchanting," adding with a little less flamboyance, "I'm awfully glad you've come. I'm afraid you won't have much of a lunch here, but we're going to strain every nerve. My excuse is that I've only been in this place a little over a week."

"It needs no excuse," said Helen. "I think it's perfectly charming. You might have been born in this room." She waved her hand to Jean.

And she, springing up from the sofa, said "Hullo, Mumsie," as usual, in her sisterly way.

Farquhar shook hands with his host, said the right thing as he always did, wrinkled his eyes at his daughter and strode across the room for a nearer look at the Corot. He noticed that an unopened cable had been flung on one of the tables. Rather careless, he thought.

"I've arranged to have lunch at once," said Jean, "and afterwards show you the house. It's much too large for us. We shall be lost in all this space. Don't you think it might be awfully amusing to furnish some of the rooms for you?"

"Awfully amusing," said Helen.

"Yes, but how about me?"

Jean turned to her father with an air of surprise.

"You? I never thought about you. Are you friends with Mumsie now? That's hardly fair,—you have always been friends, I know. What I meant to say was are you back in the fold and going to be good for a change?"

"That's the idea, exactly."

"It's in the air," she said, and danced across to Max. It was plain to see that she couldn't bear to be out of the reach of his hand.

It would have been human if Farquhar had told her why he had returned to the fold. As it was he endured the naïve blow in silence and was glad that she hadn't attributed his new leaf to his encroaching years.

It was uncanny that she, of all people, had used the Marcus Aurelius word which had brought the walls of the Villa Pico della Mirandola about his ears.

Reverting to Jean's suggestion that she should live in that house as an elderly mamma,—an unpaid house-

keeper,—Helen said, "Have you consulted Mr. Lorbenstein about furnishing rooms for me?"

Max pretended to shudder. "Max, Max," he said, "please." And, with a sort of old fashioned courtesy, he went up to Helen quickly and raised her hand to his lips. "Never, at any time, however beautiful may be the things with which I surround myself, will there be anything lovely enough to compare with you."

"How very nice," she said, hiding a mixture of feelings behind a practised smile.

Max followed a sudden tangent. "If you like my Corot," he said to Farquhar, "and are interested in pictures, may I show you something that I picked up in The Hague a month ago? It isn't signed, but all the same it's one of the most delicious things I've ever seen. It's up against the wall in what's going to be the dining room."

There was something about him of the boyish friendliness of Alan Bracknell. It was irresistible.

Farquhar said, "Yes, by all means do. One can pick up rather nice things in Holland by searching about."

They left the room together, as if they had known each other for years.

Jean was unable to hide her love or disguise her enthusiasm. Why should she? "Isn't he wonderful, Mumsie?"

"Yes, my dear," said Helen. "He *is* wonderful. And when I say that I don't mean as a musician. As a man he's kind, considerate and strangely unspoilt. A dear boy, in every way."

Jean became solemn and awestruck. "I can't understand why he should have fallen in love with me. I feel so crude, so ungainly, such frightfully raw material. I've got to do a thousand things to make myself fit for him.

And oh, goodness, he does want looking after. I wish you could see his bedroom. His clothes are all over the floor. He has a man, of course, but he's really not much use. He never puts on his buttons or mends his socks."

Helen laughed,—she had to. "But *you* don't! You! You're just as untidy yourself."

"Not now," said Jean. "You're thinking of the old days."

"Not so very old, my dear! Only a few weeks."

Jean laughed. "I know," she said, "but a few weeks is a life time when very big things take place. In fact, the whole face of the world can alter completely in under sixty seconds. It did in my case. I came out of a tunnel at the sight of Max. It was blinding. I've hardly recovered. . . . Do you know, Mumsie, I really do believe that I was born for Max, that all the years I've spent in growing up have been shaping themselves to this. Am I a throwback, do you think?"

"A throwback? What do you mean? Do you imagine that I'm incapable of love?"

"Oh no, no. I know you're not. You've shown me glimpses of that. But, I mean, don't you think that I must have in me something of the women of a hundred years ago, whose triumphs were not in social success and leadership but in doing things for a man,—*the* man? It's awfully funny, but the other day Max had a button off his shirtcuff and although I'd never done it before and never thought I should I sewed it on for him. I mean it—it just came . . . Really and truly, Mumsie, that was a big moment for me. I simply swelled with pride. I never thought, and I'm sure you didn't, that I should become a useful person."

It was more than Helen could bear. She threw her arms round this naïve, charming pilgrim, this blazing enthusiast, this suddenly old-fashioned pioneer, and drew her close. And as she did so the barriers of her simulation of indifference were swept away by tears.

She said to herself once more, "No. It can't be done. What a brute I should be if I tried to wrench her away."

Jean had never seen her mother cry, but she was not in the least surprised. She cried a little herself. This thing seemed to be so good, so wonderful. She was grateful, though she didn't know to whom. One night, several months ago, she had announced to a room full of similar children that she was an atheist, and their answer had been "So are we." But now, in her joy, she was doubtful. It is only in moments of joy and sorrow that the name of God comes in.

But when Farquhar and his future son-in-law returned they found the girl and her mother not in tears but laughter, mirthless laughter on Helen's part, ironic, and not without pain. At this early age her girl had found what she herself had only finally achieved in time to give it up. All her love in future must be centred on her daughter,—and she was worth it all. Her dear baby who had sprung into a woman. And she was quick to notice that Farquhar, the apparently cold and inarticulate Farquhar, with the straight back and hidebound ideas, had been won by the Jew.

The servant entered the room, bowed to his young master and made a gesture towards the table. He murmured the fact that lunch was ready to be served. But before he followed to the table Farquhar, with his tidy mind, picked up the unopened cable. It seemed to him most frightfully

slack to leave t where it was. After all, someone, if only an agent, had gone to the trouble of sending it. Why not attend to the thing?

He said, "I beg your pardon, but have you noticed this?"

"What?" said Max. "Oh, that. Yes. I believe it came last night."

"It may be important," said Farquhar.

"Nothing's important except lunch," said Max. "I hate to be interfered with." He laughed and dropped it near his plate. "We begin with grapefruit," he said, "one of the nicest things that ever came out of America. Soup follows, then sole. After that . . ." He threw up his hands.

Jean made a long arm for the cable. "No," she said in her quite new matronly manner. "Father's right. We ought to see what this is. It may be about your recitals. . . . Did you really leave this over from last night? Suppose that I were away from you and it had come from me?"

"I should have known," said Max, "and opened it at once. It would have sung your name. It would have vibrated and leapt to my hand." He was perfectly grave.

"Well," said Jean, "here goes. I feel as Father does. I think it's a beastly shame." She laughed to take the sting of her remark away and touched the boy's face with her finger.

Then she read it aloud. "*'It is in the paper that you have engaged yourself to the daughter of a Christian. stop. It cannot be. stop. I wish you to come home. Jacob J. Lorbenstein.'*

"What on earth does he mean?" asked Jean. "Who is he?"

"My father," said Max. "I fail to understand." He took the paper and stared at the typewritten words.

Helen caught Farquhar's astonished gaze. She felt that he was saying "Is this the way out or shall we side with them?"

Before anything else could be said Jean took the cable, rolled it into a ball and flicked it into a corner. "Fall to," she cried out gaily. "I'm as hungry as a wolf."

"I too," said Max, catching the infection. How stupid of his dear old father to send such utter bosh.

And here in Jacob J. Lorbenstein was another man out of his time,—still another Canute.

PART VII

I

HELEN returned to the hotel alone. Farquhar, pining for exercise, had gone for a long, hard walk.

The pleasant hall of the Mercédès was filled with an unusual crowd of people, the greater number of whom were elderly men and women. Most of the men wore eccentric provincial beards and many of the women were quite amazingly convex. All of them were dressed for a wedding. The large reception room was as full as a sardine tin. There was much laughter and conversation, badinage, and the sort of sheepish horseplay that is characteristic of the French on festive occasions.

A tall man, carrying a brown dump hat, rose from a chair by the lift. It was Gamlingay, with his inevitable eyeglass and his Wellingtonian nose. The sight of him made Helen's heart jump and sent the colour into her face.

He spoke rather quickly and volubly. He was not unlike a boy who had come to ask his father for a small sum over and above his allowance and who had clean forgotten the speech that he had been rehearsing outside the door.

He said "I'm awfully sorry to barge in like this. Do

forgive me. I had no intention of getting off at Cherbourg and coming on to Paris, but somehow or other the temptation was greater than I could resist. In any case, I never resist temptation. It's frightfully bad for the conscience. Then, too, knowing your trouble, I thought perhaps that I might be able to lend a hand. . . . In short, I'm here."

He threw himself on her mercy.

All this gave Helen time to steady herself. During the last few weeks she had had a considerable amount of practice in that art. Gamlingay was the last person whom she had expected, or had any desire, to see,—then, or in the future. On the ship, coming over, she had made up her mind to dig him out of her thoughts. She had put the spade in deep and covered up the hole, but at the first sound of his voice it was only too plain that she had left roots in the ground.

"I don't think you can help," she said, "but it's very good of you to offer your services."

She was as cool as an early September morning as she touched the bell for the lift.

"Am I . . . dismissed?" asked Gamlingay, flatly.

And she said, fearful of giving an inch away, "Were you ever engaged?"

"Not officially, not on the permanent list of your faithful servants, but by a bond of cherished slavery, yes, and by that I'm chained to you."

His attempt at his old Elizabethanism was very feeble. He was not in the mood for gambolling, and was by no means gay. If the truth must be told he cut a pathetic figure, waiting for a crumb of Helen's favour, hat in hand. He knew perfectly well that she had erected a

hedge because her daughter's individualism had overwhelmed her own.

"Can there be any harm in tea?" he added.

"Hardly," she answered. "Where would you like to take me?"

He took the hint, saw that she had no intention of seeing him alone, and said, "Oh, there are heaps of places. There's one at the Rond Point, for instance, from which one obtains a vivid and kaleidoscopic view of the most respectable end of Paris. Or, if one feels inclined for the security of the English middle class, there's W. H. Smith's in the Rue de Rivoli. I don't advise it. I can't imagine your juxtaposition to the national brown mackintosh of my country and the man who wears plus fours under all circumstances as soon as he leaves his office. The charabanc people who leave bun bags behind as mementoes, cut their initials on ancient trees and historic buildings and travel in herds like sheep."

He was talking rot and he knew it. He liked these people. They read his books, especially in cheap editions. They provided him with the royalities upon which he ran his rooms in Mount Street and his cottage in the country, —where, by that time, cockerels had found their voices and lavender was ripe.

The lift had come down and the one-armed man was waiting with a smile. Was Helen afraid to take this man up to her suite? Yes, she was. And so she took him up. Like her husband she had apprenticed herself to pain.

"I want you to see a much more wonderful view of Paris," she said. "It's quite electrical."

Inconsistent as ever he was sorry and glad. There was

Irish blood in his veins. Sorry because he had made up his mind that this episode was over. He had accepted his *conge* that night in Park Avenue at the sight of Farquhar's face. He had placed himself on the retired list, at the moment of success. Glad, because he was more in love than ever, and pined to watch and listen to this most charming woman even if he were obliged to do so in metaphorical armour with the vizor down.

He was going to England tomorrow.

And so they went up together and waited in silence while Farquhar's valet made up his mind to do somebody else's work and open the door. Helen forgot to order tea. She crossed the sittingroom to the middle window and opened it.

"Look," she said.

Gamlingay's eyes were arrested not by the beautiful church of Montmarte in the distance, among a million roofs, or the trees in the Bois and the lines of traffic, but by the burning light beneath the Arc, the everlasting beacon to loyalty and service, to love and sacrifice, as she hoped that they would be.

He turned to Helen finally with a very gallant smile.

"I see your point," he said. "I salute you. But believe me, you most dear and adorable woman, I didn't come today with any sneaking intention of attempting to blow out *your* light. I longed simply to lay a wreath on the monument of my love."

He went across to the table. Someone, and he believed it was Helen, had placed a handful of carnations in a vase. He broke one off, returned and placed it to her lips, and mounted it in his buttonhole.

It was his intention from the next day until, as a very old man, he doddered to the grave, to make a morning and evening pilgrimage to a small box in which that flower would lie.

There was no need that he should explain this. Helen knew.

"I think it will do you good," he said, "to get things off your chest, and it will make me feel less lonely and less deserted to be treated as a friend."

Helen gave him a grateful smile and waved her hand to a chair. "I'm glad you came today. It will be a relief to tell you things. But under the circumstances nothing can do me good."

"You mean that you haven't succeeded in rescuing your little girl?"

"No, and I don't see how we can."

"Good Lord, you amaze me. I expected to hear that Farquhar had played the heavy father and that you and he are about to return to America with your prodigal daughter in tow. Isn't that man a Jew?"

"Yes," said Helen, "he is. An unmistakable Jew. The son of a man who is the father of his race,—the New York patriarch."

"Well then."

"In a sort of way it is well, because Max is a charming person, in addition to being one of the finest pianists I have ever heard. Erskine and I are numbered among his most enthusiastic admirers. The more we see of him the more we like him and the conclusion that we have come to is that Jean's a lucky girl."

"Great Scott!" said Gamlingay.

The last picture that he had in his mind of Farquhar

and his wife was of a man who held in his hand a message which had brought down his house in ruins, and a woman for whom it had put an end to private happiness.

Helen guessed his thoughts. His face was as expressive as a child's. It always gave him away.

"Yes, it's hard to believe. We rushed away from New York for the specific purpose of preventing Jean from plunging herself and us into an irretrievable mess. The day we entered these rooms we were absolutely determined, at all costs, to save ourselves and her. Instead of finding a wilful girl in a Bolshevistic mood and a man rather gleefully ready to take advantage of a momentary infatuation,—what? A new and grown-up Jean, a responsible, self-sacrificing young woman ready to lay herself in thankfulness on the altar of a deep and triumphant love, and a man, my dear Edmund, who is physically, intellectually and possibly spiritually more than worthy of her. Last night Erskine and I talked the whole thing over until the early hours of the morning and when finally, in his quiet way, he said that Max Lorbenstein is a boy to whom the most loving and devoted father would be glad to give his daughter I quite agreed with him." She gave a laugh which was not very mirthful. "What do you think of that?"

Gamlingay sprang to his feet in his old exuberant way. "You add to my respect and admiration," he said, "which seemed an impossible feat. What astounds me is that Farquhar, the cut and dried stereotyped Farquhar, is your partner in this deed. Diehardism is dying. Tolerance has returned!"

"Yes," said Helen, "but you mustn't run away with the idea that we've been forced to this conclusion without hu-

miliation and a rather dreadful sense of defeat, as well as, if I must be honest, an immense amount of shame."

"Shame? What on earth do you mean?"

"That's the word, my friend. What sort of a mother do you think this makes me feel? . . . Of influence none. Of example,—for which I ought to be grateful,—none. In all this I am ignored. I find myself treated by Jean as though I were her little sister, a rather naughty little sister, one who was an intermittent companion in the pursuit of a good time. 'The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.' "

"And what, if you please, is the attitude of the man you admire so much?"

"Kind, gracious, and friendly," said Helen, without a touch of sarcasm. "We have been accepted as Jean's parents rather with relief at the fact that we are presentable, well enough educated, and of sufficient sophistication to appreciate his wit, understand his music and never interfere."

Gamlingay was winded. He could only throw up his arms. It was his habit to imitate a hysterical windmill in moments of great surprise.

"Lorbenstein. Lorbenstein," he said presently, "isn't that the name of the man who lives in a house on Fifth Avenue as big as the British Museum, endows hospitals, finances symphony orchestras and surrounds himself with the most beautiful pictures that money can procure? What relation, is he, if any, to your future son-in-law?"

"Father," said Helen.

"A union of aristocrats. How splendid! But what will America say?"

That was a question which Helen dreaded to face. A woman of extraordinary courage, daring and brilliance, who had brought about several minor revolutions in New York Society customs, and who, in the face of ridicule, had worn frocks not wholly in fashion, she was in mortal fear of headlines or the connection of her name with any publicity which would damage its prestige. Over and over again she had shuddered in sympathetic horror at the way in which the marital blunders and misfortunes of her friends had been exploited by the Press; in which domestic and other troubles had been seized upon, exaggerated, and used ghoulishly for the sake of circulation. This dreadful process seemed to her to put one of the largest blots on civilization. Unlike most women who were doomed to spend their lives in Society she hated to see her name even in the decorous columns devoted to social events. She supposed that she must have inherited this nausea from the wife of the first American de Winton, who had belonged to a Quaker family.

And so she said, "Don't ask me that. I won't take that hedge until I come to it."

"When will you come to it?"

She shook her head with what was to him a new and strange indecision. "I don't know. Jean wants us to stay and see her married. She thinks we shall dress the church. That must happen before we can make any plans."

"I can hardly believe all this," said Gamlingay. "Farquhar was in such a warlike mood when I saw him last. Shall you go back to New York to stay? I mean are you going to stick your chin up, weather the storm and live this thing down?"

Helen's nostrils fluttered and there was a tightness round her lips.

"I can imagine no remote circumstance that will ever make me own to defeat," she said. "Of course, I shall stay. I shall carry on, as Erskine calls it, and keep the flag on the roof. Jean will be the one to suffer, even with my backing. The prejudice against Jews is so deep-rooted that it has become one of the things which money can't overcome. The only thing, I think."

"Your poor dear Jean," said Gamlingay, who was just a bit of a snob.

"No," said Helen, "she's not my poor dear Jean. She's in love with a man who's in love with her. She's conquered life, my friend. If I had my time over again I would do exactly what she's doing, and thank God for the chance."

"I withdraw my comment," said Gamlingay. "Without love—what's the use?"

He went to the window and stood there for a moment with his eyes on the perpetual flame. It seemed to him to be a rather curious coincidence that it should be so close to Helen's windows at such a moment in her life. Or was it curious? What we call coincidences have often been definitely prearranged and are all in the scheme of things.

"When we were lunching at Max Lorbenstein's house today Erskine insisted upon his opening a cable which had been lying about. From whom do you think it was?"

Gamlingay shook his head. "I never was a good hand at guessing," he said. "I'm a far too impatient person."

"From the man whose virtues and charitable deeds you

ran off just now with such accuracy,—Jacob J. Lorbenstein. In the most definite terms he forbade his son to marry the daughter of a Christian."

Gamlingay gave a roar. "What? Nonsense. He ought to jump at it."

"No. It's a question of pride,—the outcome of persecution. In any other country he would be a highly honoured man. In England a Peer without doubt. In America his name is put on lists of charitable institutions and his cheques are greedily sought for by every licensed beggar. But do you ever find him dining in our houses, included in our invitations to any functions other than those from which we exclude ourselves? Never. He may be a good man, a rich man, and a cultivated man, but he's a Jew and he's barred. I'm sorry to say that I've barred him." She laughed and raised her eyebrows. "This is his natural revenge."

Gamlingay was interested, a little excited, even. He scented a plot in this.

"Did his cable have any effect? Is his son one of the few young men who remain dutiful to their fathers?"

Helen shook her head. "The message was forgotten immediately it was read. My dear man, these are the days when parents do not count. Even if we bring up our children with love, self-sacrifice, and devotion, the moment they leave the nest and take to the wing they are off. I only told you this because I thought it would amuse you. I'm frightfully sorry I forgot to ring for tea."

"I'll ring," said Gamlingay eagerly.

He didn't want to go. He knew that this was probably

the last time that he would ever see this woman, except, perhaps, in crowds; once again he deeply resented the interference of a girl who had more time for joy than remained to him.

"Where are you going from here?" asked Helen.

"I was going to say 'home,' " he answered. "But now that I have lost you I can only call it a place in which I shall mark time until we can begin all over again."

"Tell me again what it's like," she said, controlling her voice.

"Very sweet and old. Set down in a garden where the angels walk."

"Give it my love," she said softly.

Gamlingay remained quite firm to his place. The effort turned him white. He would have given two years of his life for her to have said "Give it a kiss from me" so that he might have taken it from her lips. As it was he bowed.

"And what of you?" he asked.

Helen was silent for a moment. "I'm going to do my best to be very kind to the loneliest man I know. He has been very kind to me. Can you see any reason why we shouldn't go down hill hand in hand,—as he likes to put it in his disconcerting way?"

At which Gamlingay dug his nails into his palms and bit his lip.

"No," he said, "I can't. I wish you the best of luck."

He turned rather quickly and went to the chair on which he had placed his hat. He didn't say goodbye. It would not have been true. He simply said "Au revoir then. I shall wait."

And when the waiter came in Helen was alone.

"Tea for one," she said.

II

Farquhar returned to the hotel at the moment when Jean and Max Lorbenstein dashed up in a car. It was perfectly plain that something had happened. The faces of these two young people wore worried looks.

It was Jean who spoke.

"Father," she said, "can we go up and see Mumsie? We've got to ask her advice and yours."

To which Max added, with characteristic courtesy, "I'm too sorry to trouble you in this way, but I don't think we shall have to keep you very long."

This was a peculiar attitude. Farquhar was slightly amused. Advice,—from himself and Helen, two old people, mere parents! Had the world turned upside down?

"Come up of course," he said. "I'm very much at your service. I don't know where my wife is, but we can probably get hold of her. I wouldn't care to undertake the grave responsibility off my own bat."

His sarcasm passed over their heads. They made for the lift, were taken up to the floor under the roof of the hotel and went quickly to the door of the suite. The key was in the lock.

They found Helen standing at the window. The tray was still upon the table, although Gamlingay had left the room about half an hour before. She turned in great surprise. She had not expected to see anything of Jean until she had received permission to call upon her again.

"We are to be consulted," said Farquhar, and just for a moment the old twinkle came back to his eyes.

Helen echoed the word,—that most unusual word. "Consulted? . . . Very well," she said, puzzled and astonished. "Let's have a conference. Let's draw up

round the table with blotting pads and paper and do the thing as I've always believed it's done in banks."

She permitted herself the pleasure of a little mild irony. It was lost upon those two.

"It's this," said Jean. "Read it."

The crumpled envelope that she handed to her mother contained what was evidently a bomb.

"It's from my sister," said Max. "It came while I was practising. We've been discussing it for an hour. We made up our minds that we needed your help."

Farquhar went over to the mantelpiece, took up his pouch and deliberately loaded his pipe. He hadn't smoked it once during the whole of that day. But at that moment, and with that statement in his ears, he felt strangely like a good, old-fashioned, parent, and his taste for tobacco made itself felt again.

Helen read the message from end to end, shot a quick look at her husband and read it all over again. Then, after a thoughtful pause, she held it out to Farquhar. "What do you make of it?"

Meantime Jean and Max had taken up a position near the window and were standing hand in hand. They looked like babes in the wood.

Farquhar cocked his eyeglass, without which he was lost. He could see everything on the horizon but nothing near at hand.

What he read was this, *"If you wish see Father alive better come right away. Stop. He has worked himself into nervous breakdown. Stop. Every member of family been worrying him. Stop. Beseech you come home before going any further. If you have loyalty to us and love for Father sail Saturday. Ruth."*

"I see," said Farquhar. "Well, this is serious. But why do you come to us? Have you no love and loyalty for your Father? . . . I don't see how we can inspire it at a moment's notice if not."

Max said, "I beg your pardon, but that's not under discussion. I adore my father. I owe him everything. I can't for the life of me see why my engagement to Jean should cause any such sensation but I shall sail on Saturday, of course. But you see this ruins our plans. We were to have been married next week. Meantime, what am I to do with Jean? I shall be lost without her." He put his arm round her shoulder and his lips to her hair.

"But he won't take me with him without someone to look after me. How perfectly absurd, Mumsie. I came over alone!"

"Not quite the same thing," said the boy. "I can't get her to understand that we ought not to go together. We've had our first quarrel over this."

Farquhar was nearer laughter than he had been for a considerable time. Were the young so completely triumphant as they thought they were, after all? Here was a lad with the remnants of dying convention. If this wasn't funny, what was?

"Well," he said, "what can we do?"

And before Jean could blurt out, "Why, come with us of course," Max made a step or two towards Helen and put what appeared to be an awkward question in words that were less abrupt.

"Could you . . . I mean, would it be in any way possible . . . I think I heard you say . . ."

Helen retained her gravity with a supreme effort. "You mean that you would like us to chaperone Jean?"

She couldn't resist the temptation to make him say those words.

"Oh Mumsie," said Jean, "isn't it silly? All this fuss about nothing. This conventional stuff is as dead as the dodo and I'm as good as his wife as it is."

"That's perfectly true," said Max, "but we've got to consider gossip and I must protect your name." He turned to Helen and added, "Don't you agree with me?"

Helen allowed herself one quick glance at her husband. She seemed to say, "This is Parents' hour."

"I do agree," she said. "Well, what do you suggest?"

And she waited quietly for this boy to bring himself up to the scratch. It was a moment that she wouldn't have missed for anything in the world. It was going to make up for many of the humiliations which had given her secret tears.

"If you're going back fairly soon,—or rather, a little sooner than that—I was wondering whether you could make it convenient to sail on Saturday with us. I should be intensely obliged. I'm afraid it's asking a great deal, but I think it's the only way out."

Acting for all she was worth Helen rose and went to Farquhar. She would make the most of this.

"What do you think?" she asked. "We've only just come off one boat. Could you stand another so soon? What are your plans exactly?"

Farquhar gave these questions his deep consideration. He appeared to be running over the engagements of which he had none. It was only human to take advantage of this situation and wring it dry.

"I'm afraid it's a little difficult," he said, slowly. "I'm rather tightly booked up. But as this is a matter of life

and death and our young friend is anxious, therefore, to conform, however unwillingly, to his father's desires, I *can* get away on Saturday,—but only if you'll come too."

"Mumsie! Please say yes!"

"Well, let me see," said Helen. "I had intended to go to Biarritz, spend the rest of the summer in various favourite places, take the cure at Vichy and wind up with a series of visits to my English friends. But, in spite of great disappointment, I couldn't face the possibility of having a death on my hands."

She turned to Max Lorbenstein and held out a sympathetic hand. "Make it so," she said.

Max bent forward with a murmur of gratitude,—a foreign and emotional murmur,—and put her hand to his lips.

III

Max was totally unable to make it so.

The boy, like all artists, was unpractical. The mere thought of a sudden move, packing, procuring tickets, cashing cheques and giving orders to servants had flung him into a state of bewildered excitement, and made him imitate the actions of a squirrel in a cage. Farquhar knew that. He had met the breed before. And so he had functioned at once as he had done so often during the war as an officer commanding a regiment. He had begun by making a list, upon which, under the heading of four names, he had jotted down very carefully everything required. It had been too late that night to find the offices of the steamship companies open but he had been on the doorstep of the White Star office the follow-

ing morning as soon as the clerks had changed their coats and put paper on their cuffs. The French are a thrifty race.

The result was that he might have been found on Saturday morning herding his little flock through the barrack-like buildings on the docks at Cherbourg with four passports in his hand. The mass of luggage, whose labels he had made out himself, had been seized upon by several members of the blue-bloused gang of porters who fought and scrambled among themselves. Finally, after the usual tiresome delays, with Americans divided from English like sheep from goats, he had led the way over the gang-plank of the sturdy White Star steamer that was lying against the quay. Then had followed the process of stacking the luggage on board, the crash of big trunks, the slithering down of suitcases, the loud dramatic cries and urgings, the ant-like march, and at last the piercing screams of the siren. It had been more quickly over than usual, because, at that time of year, the great flow of traffic was the other way.

Farquhar had been relieved to find how small was the number of passengers. He saw himself on the *Homeric* with elbow room, with uncluttered decks, and with a gymnasium, the excellence of which he knew, where there would not be the usual stream of experimenters who dodged from horse to camel, from bicycle to rowing machine, with flippancy and noise.

Like the Duc de Bercy he had made a practice of keeping a diary since the end of his salad days. He was useful with a pen. Every night before going to bed,—as a sort of religious act,—he had sat down in a dressing gown and written it up to date. There were times when

his entries had been blunt, economical and like those of a military log. "Weather appalling" for instance. "Day uninteresting. Digestion good. Lunched with Brownstack, a late Major of mine. Deteriorating. Drinks too much. Lights one cigarette from another. Rotten trick. Sign of relaxing will-power. Give him a year before he puffs on the tennis court." Or "Six hours of sunshine. Walked twelve miles. Six up on Warminster. Played his course. Rough frightful, mostly heather. Found W more than ever like a copy of a newspaper that one finds in a suitcase that has not been used for years. New mashie did good work. Wingate mixture very pleasant. Shall certainly continue. Final opinion of Lloyd George, —a cross between Marc Anthony and Billy Sunday. Sleeping well." All of which could have been read by his valet and very frequently was.

There were, however, other times when he had let himself go in further detail, felt his pulse and taken his temperature, or, in other words, dissected his reactions to the most private events of his life, and set down, somewhat self-consciously, his emotions, fears, mental disturbances, disappointments, and the lack of gratitude which, like every other man, he had met with almost daily. He had written with a surer and more fluent touch, as time went by.

Sometimes, having nothing better to do, he had turned back the pages of these rapidly accumulating volumes and thus lived over again the events of departed years. Not often, and always with regrets. It had seemed to him that he might have done so much better if he had been able miraculously to have lived all over again.

The pages devoted to his break-away from the Villa

Pico della Mirandola he had never re-read. They were very much too painful.

He began what he called the *Homeric* episode with a reference to his wife. "Helen," he wrote, "is a first rate sportsman. The way in which she has taken the most serious and heartbreaking event in her life has won my whole respect. Her courage, extraordinary self-control and the continuous subjection of her quick impulses to her desire to do the best that she can for Jean, deserve the highest praise. I find myself liking and admiring her more and more.

"Today, our first day out, her sympathetic consideration of Max and Jean amounted to genius, I thought. There must have been many moments when her fastidious sensibility was roughly jarred by the almost alarming, though quite unconscious, lack of reticence on Jean's part,—especially when she stood against the rail with her arm round that boy's neck. They looked like a shop girl and a soldier in the park.

"Nothing is so extraordinary to me as the undisciplined behaviour of modern girls,—however well-bred they may be. As exemplified by Jean, with all her education, they seem, with few exceptions, to be creatures of untamable impulses, who do precisely what they want to do without the smallest consideration for the feelings of others,—as primeval in their attitude to life as the natives of an untrained Race. Is it fearlessness? Is it a supreme disregard of rules and regulations? Is it a rather glorious sense of freedom that makes them appear to what they probably call the old and frowsty gang so extraordinarily bad form? I haven't made up my mind. But when I caught Helen's eyes at that moment I could see that she

was asking herself whether she was escorting to America for philanthropic reasons a young man and woman who belong to the servant class. But there she remained in her deck-chair, the finished product of civilization, with a kind indulgent smile. When I caught her eyes and conveyed my comment, which was that third class passengers were still trespassing on our deck, she merely raised her eyebrows very slightly and went back to her book. If I had had my way I would have touched Jean on the shoulder sharply and said, 'Behave yourself.' But she wouldn't have understood. The ship, like the world, is hers. She felt impelled at that moment to embrace the man she loved and as it was a perfectly natural feeling she carried it out.

"Naturalness is the keynote of the younger generation. I don't know whether to admire or deplore it. I only know that it fills me with great discomfort, as do certain customs in France. When we talked it over later Helen summed it up by saying 'It's evolution not revolution. In a way it's admirable. The things that you and I put down to crudity and rawness are merely signs of growth and an upward movement, disconcerting as they are. Hypocrisy's over. The young people of today have discarded the antimacassar, have taken the drapery from the legs of pianos, freed the stuffed canary from its cage, thrown open all the windows, and let out the Sunday smell. That's all. They've performed a huge Spring clean, flung an antiseptic fluid in all our corners, and run a vacuum cleaner over all the old conventions. They are as natural as the nice clean animals in a model farm. Let's make up our minds to that.' Well, I will do my best.

"There was no auction in the smoking room tonight. Not enough men to make it worth while. The few who are on board seem to me to be tailors going over to take orders, business men in pursuit of the wily dollar and one or two actors who have been engaged to play in one or other of the few English plays that are now produced in New York. The excellent smoking room, in which I have seen great crowds of excited people laughing and bidding, was a wilderness.

"We played bridge after dinner. Lorbenstein's game is appalling. He declares on four trumps, Jack high, is utterly without concentration and constantly revokes. Artists always do, especially when they are musicians. A man can't have all the gifts. Not that I think bridge requires any brains. I've noticed that the subaltern is always a better player than the General, the unsuccessful man than the multi-millionaire. Even parsons play a good game, though they're a frightful nuisance with their dull bright gaiety and passion to win. Helen plays a beautiful game, I'm rather astonished to find. Quiet, too, which is extraordinary for a woman. The average woman airs all her inhibitions, repeats every story she has ever heard, and blackens the names of her friends during the course of a game of bridge. Jean will improve. She has card sense, and having once sorted her hand holds it steady and fan-wise, instead of closing it up and searching all the way through it every time she plays.

"After Helen and Jean had gone to bed Lorbenstein and I paced the deck together until one o'clock. At first he was silent and pre-occupied, but later opened up. I find that he talks well, has read widely, knows every inch of the Continent, and has thought a good deal on interna-

tional subjects. Rather unique for one who has devoted so much time to his work. A hard task-mistress. Among other things he said that he was really very anxious about his father and looked forward with horror to all those days at sea. I gathered that although he has been a wandering member of his family he possessed the extraordinary sense of love and loyalty to his family and his race which is peculiar to the Jews. It is one of their most noble and praiseworthy traits for which I respect them greatly. I wish the same could be said of us. He was very boyish and charming about Jean. Without the slightest affectation he told me how much he loved her and how wonderful he thought she was. He might easily have set his words to music now and then. If I were asked to give him a character I should have to say that he is in every way an exceptional young man,—clean-minded and simple, and, in spite of the outward appearance of sophistication, a virgin mind. I'll guarantee that he has never messed about. Looking to the fact that the combination of music and physical beauty makes women lay down all their defences this would be considered a rash statement. All the same it's my considered opinion and, of course, I'm devilish glad. A man looks at this particular thing with a Cromwellian eye where his daughter is concerned.

"He gave me his hand before going to bed, held mine warmly, and said 'I don't think I've ever met a man of your age whom I like as much as you,' which flattered me very much. Even now he doesn't look upon me as the father of Jean, but as a sort of accidental relation of hers who is without the power of criticism or interference. I must add here, before I forget it, that although he is

rushing to see his father he ignores entirely his capacity or his right to lay down the law on the question of his marriage."

Then this, dated the second day out.

"I spent several very jolly hours in the gym with Jean. We galloped for an hour on opposite horses, raced on the bicycles and threw the health ball. She was in the highest spirits, and there is not the remotest suggestion about her of anxiety or fear. I dragged in a rather cruel reference to Jacob Lorbenstein's cable, but I could see that it hadn't made a dent on her mind. His declaration of horror as to the fact that his son was engaged to a Christian had passed off her back like water off a duck's. She wasn't even amused, as most girls would have been, I suppose. It simply didn't matter in the scheme of things. She was much more friendly with me, although she didn't, and I suppose never will, regard me as her father. I should be a fool if I expected such a thing. I must accept the fact that I am to be treated merely as a man who happens to be married to her mother, a sort of stepfather, a naturally indulgent person whom she has met from time to time. I can't expect anything else, though I'm bound to confess that it hurts me very much. I find myself having to treat her as though she were the young daughter of a friend,—someone to entertain and amuse in an aloof and elderly manner and be extremely grateful for any kindness that she may show. This is all the more painful to me as I get to know her better. She has many of Helen's best qualities, among which are courage, wit, observation, the faculty of enjoyment and the gift of laughter,—and by Jove, it is a gift. As a man with a frozen face, and a rapidly dying resilience, who all his

life has been most horribly semi-detached, I say this with admiration and regret. I remember being described by a woman with whom I lived for a couple of years as a man who sowed his wild oats in the very neatest rows, and who trained them with as much solemnity and care as though they were rare sweet-peas. I was a 'grave waster, a responsible ne'er-do-well.' She was quite sure that I would rather starve than eat a fatted calf that hadn't been properly cooked. A clever woman that."

Then this, dated the third day out.

"There is a mass of gossip on board. When Glazeby laid out my flannels this morning before I went to the gym, and watched me put two lumps of sugar into my early morning tea, he said, 'I beg your pardon, Sir, but is it true that Mr. Lorbenstein is going to marry Miss Jean?' And when I ignored the question, as I always do when they're awkward, he went on to say, though not without funk, 'They won't believe it downstairs. The head steward who says that he knows what Americans think about Jews told me this morning that if Miss Jean marries Mr. Lorbenstein she'll be worse than dead.' I glared and he disappeared with his tail between his legs. Nevertheless this is the first intimation of the sort of thing that we shall have to face when we arrive in New York. No, not the first. I had forgotten the panicky Dorothy, who talked over the telephone to Helen about social suicide. Already my back hair begins to stand on end when I think of what will happen when reporters come on board. There will be cameras and questions, the ugly Press greed for the succulent morsel, the cannibal palate for the taste of human trouble. Well, it's got to be faced. 'The best laid schemes of mice and men.' Which

reminds me that our departure from Paris and our crossing all together on this ship already must have been cabled to the other side, because a wireless message arrived from Tony Northrup this morning. The poor lad simply said 'Put me out of my misery. Deny the story about Jean.' To which I sent the following answer. 'Desperately sorry to tell you that the story is true.' But am I desperately sorry? That wasn't an honest answer, though it was kindly meant. The more I see of Jean and Max, the more often I discuss and re-discuss this matter with Helen, the more I find myself disarmed of the last shreds of my antagonism. I can only say to myself, over and over again, what Anastasia said that afternoon in London. These two are, in very truth, like a nympth and a fawn. There is something enchanting about their amazing unreticence, their open and unashamed love-making, their almost spiritual passion."

And again.

"About an hour after breakfast this morning Jean and I went up on the boat deck and played tennis. We had the place to ourselves for the first twenty minutes or so. Then a man whom I took to be a British politician came up from below and walked up and down with a worried look and a bundle of notes in his hand. I think he must have been a Labour member crossing to America for the purpose of raising funds for the miners' wives. He bore a close resemblance to those youngish cantankerous men, with a conceited manner and obstreperous hair, who were conscientious objectors during the War, and were put to cleaning out stables and other appropriate jobs. In a high-pitched voice, and what I've heard called a Bayswater accent, he was rehearsing a speech aloud, pulling

up short every now and then to emphasize a shrill point with a sledge-hammer gesture. There was a south-east breeze at the moment which picked up his lying words and tossed them over the rail. A half a dozen of them blew across to us, and among others, we caught 'that murderous Baldwin upon whose soul lies the stain of the blood of thousands of children.' With one eye on his notes and the other on Jean he carried out his rehearsal during the whole of our game. He was a self-conscious creature, illiterate, unscrupulous and probably very dishonest. Already I have noticed that he does himself very well in the smoking room and generally goes about with a Corona in his teeth. My steward tells me that he occupies one of the most expensive suites on board. Where would these men be without the poisonous money from Moscow?

"Jean put up an excellent game. What a lovely child she is, and how delightful it is to see her when her eyes sparkle with health and her face has been cleaned by the sea breeze, and it is possible to see how fresh and fair her skin is. It amused me to notice how quickly she picked up the trick of looking to the right when she pitched the ring to the left. I wish to God she'd been a boy. Do I? No, I don't. She's far happier as she is. Max, who is quite unable to let her out of his sight, found us after hunting all over the ship. He is one of those curious lads who has never played games. What a lot he has lost. He has come on board with the sort of clothes that a Frenchman wears in the street and at five o'clock. I don't suppose he's ever had a tweed suit, a pair of whites, or any plus fours in his life. He goes about in blue serge, padded under the arms, with the slim waist

of an officer in the Bersaglieri. He wears French boots with long pointed toes, most of which are inlaid with white or brown, and I have never seen him without a stiff white collar and a butterfly tie. He has the extraordinary knack of wearing a boiled shirt in the daytime. How ghastly. And yet he manages to look extremely nice, though he is always distinctly foreign. He may have Austrian or German blood. I don't know which it is. But if I were to catch sight of him among a crowd I should put him down either as Italian or Russian. The word artist is as clearly stamped upon his forehead as the White Star label on a smart suitcase which has made its maiden trip. He joined in as soon as we had finished our honest and proper game. Jean begged him not to do so because the ring might damage his fingers. She treats him like a child,—a precious and valuable child, a prodigy. When he didn't miss the ring entirely he grabbed it in both his hands and let out cries of triumph. He punctuated every miss with the sort of noises that are made by peacocks or little girls who play tennis on seaside courts. Once or twice he skidded on his rather too high heels and spread-eagled on the deck. Whereupon Jean rushed forward in a state of consternation, and, like a fond mother who pulls her darling child from beneath the wheels of a Ford, spanked his hand. I don't believe I ever laughed so much in my life. We ruined the morning for the Labour member, who eventually retired. I was relieved to see him go. He had a lascivious eye. I loathe the mackerel breed, and nothing would have given me greater joy than to have punched him in the neck. Poor old England.

"After lunch today I foraged among the books in the

library and took out Page's 'Letters,'—the last volume of which I have missed deliberately. I find them very painful. They always disturb my peace of mind and my sense of national pride. He was a wise and splendid man who died of a broken spirit. It is not to be wondered at. I took my place in my deck-chair next to Helen's. Jean was on her other side and next to her was Max,—the united family. It was warm and the sun was shining in a cloudless sky. The sea was as smooth as a pond. But for the throb of the engines, those conscientious engines, in a gallant and responsible ship, it would have been impossible to have told that we were going at full speed. I have a great admiration for the men who run these ships. Max was quickly asleep, with his head, like that of a cherub, on Jean's soft shoulder. She held his hand as usual. I would give a very great deal to have achieved such sublime indifference to public opinion. I nodded off myself. It may have been the air, the rhythm, the bass, but I'm rather afraid it was age.

"I woke to hear a conversation between Jean and her mother to which I regret to say I eavesdropped, pretending to be asleep. It was Jean's remark that caused me to do this dirty trick. 'Mumsie,' I heard her say, 'what are you going to do with him?' To which Helen asked with mild astonishment 'Which him?' 'With father. Not the man with the big nose. He's been dropped I know.' Had he? I held my breath for the answer. Helen gave no answer. 'Explain yourself,' she said. 'I mean,' said Jean, 'are you going to have father on your hands in New York, and, if so, how will you manage? He seems strangely domestic to me. From little things he's dropped I gather that he's made up his mind to turn over a new leaf and

become the husband of Mrs. Farquhar, a steady and decorative object in Park Avenue and wherever else you may be.' 'I rather think that that's his idea,' said Helen, quietly. 'Why are you so interested?' 'I like him,' said Jean. 'He's awfully good-looking and rather droll and goes out of his way to be nice. But I was really thinking about you, Mumsie. Won't he interfere with your habit of collecting everybody in trousers who has the luck to make you laugh?'

"I don't know whether Helen glanced at me at that moment because I was pretending to be asleep. There was a pause before she answered and one of her silvery laughs. 'To tell you the truth,' she said, 'I've not made up my mind.' Was she telling the truth? I greatly hoped she was not. 'You see, we've been living in rather a chaos. I shan't be able to catch up until you and Max are married. As soon as that's been brought off it's quite on the cards that I shall decide to wander about. I'm rather fed up with New York. I'm a little tired of the same old round, the same old faces, the same old whirligig. I shouldn't be surprised if one of these fine mornings I pulled myself out of it all and followed a wanderlust. I'm rather inclined to believe that I'm trembling on the edge of that pathetic time in a woman's life when she puts on last year's clothes and goes from one foreign church to another with a guidebook in her hand.' 'Oh, no,' said Jean. 'You! That's silly. You'll never come to that.' 'Sooner or later,' said Helen, 'all of us come to that. The alternative is hair-dye, lifted eyebrows, a dancing partner, a domineering Pomeranian and the grasping bridge-fiend's hand. I've seen too much of that. I'm for altar pieces and the way of the Cross, the scent

of ancient incense, shadows and shady places, flights of pigeons and tired mothers telling their beads in front of the Madonna, echoing cloisters and peace.' She laughed with a catch in her voice. So did Jean, but with the most incredible mirth. She said, 'Will father follow you round? I'll bet a dollar he won't.' 'You'll probably win,' said Helen. 'If I know anything about your father, and I can't honestly say I do, I'm inclined to believe that he'll settle in the country as near as he can to a golf course, make himself neatly comfortable and keep his muscles up. I can see him surrounded with books, fishing rods, pipes and tobacco, a staff of well-trained servants, and all his thoughts of the past. He is the sort of man who settles down to the most regretful elderliness in orderly bachelorhood. From time to time he may invite me to join him in his muscular seclusion and we shall talk a little about you and your numerous babies, the political situation, herbaceous borders, the weather, and God.' 'Why God?' asked Jean. I could almost feel the way in which Helen raised her eyebrows and shot out her graceful hand. 'I've read in books,' she said, 'that God becomes a rather frequent topic of conversation when women discard their make-up and men begin to play croquet and the sands are running out. Why not?'

"There was a pause during which I thought that Jean was endeavouring to recover from an extreme surprise while she gazed at her mother's almost youthful profile with a certain amount of pain. At any rate, when she spoke again she said, 'Oh damn it, Mumsie, why do you talk like that? You've an awful long way to go. Why don't you fall in love and remarry? Father's a sportsman. He'll let you go if you ask him. I think you ought

to have another child. It's your duty to have a son.' Helen's voice took on a higher note. 'A son. . . . If I had a son by any man his name must be Farquhar, my dear.' At which I woke with a feeling of pain at my heart and a sudden prayer on my lips."

The last entry which had to do with the *Homeric* episode ran as follows:

"If, at any time, for some bad reason or other, I am asked to give the details of the most humiliating day of my life I shall bring this volume out of its hiding place and read the words that I am now about to write. I can hardly believe that I am not at this moment under arrest for murder. If it had not been for the example of Helen's brilliant self-control I am certain that I should have made an absolute fool of myself. My rage began when the papers were brought on board as we lay in Quarantine, and I saw that our arrival in New York had been given as much space on the front pages as though another European war had been declared. We had been spied upon the whole way over, it transpired, by a descriptive writer in the employment of one of the great Press agencies. This person, who seems to be a cross between Anita Loos and Noel Coward, had sent a daily wireless message in which he had dealt in the most minute detail with every one of our actions during the course of the voyage. He had even gone to the extent of reporting scraps of conversation, and what he hadn't been able to overhear he had invented with a masterly pen. All this had appeared under enormous headlines, and in the paper that I picked up haphazard I read a complete summary of his damnable, but, I must confess, diabolically clever reactions to our most insignificant

movements and doings. It occupied the whole first page and was continued on the last. It was illustrated with photographs of Helen in the various stages of her career and of me in uniform, as a tennis player, a fisherman, a killer of big game and as what the papers love to call a Clubman,—whatever that may be. Also there were pictures of the houses in Park Avenue, Grosvenor Square, the various famous English country places that we have rented from time to time, and, by God, of the Villa Pico della Mirandola, though I'm thankful to say that in connection with this there was no mention of Lillian's name.

"The whole history of the Lorbenstein family had been set out too, fully illustrated. The house of Jacob J. and the history of his world-famous collection of pictures duly appeared on this ghastly and efficient page. There, also, were photographs of Max and Jean, alone and together, the latter snapped on the ship. These must have been sent ashore the night that the pilot came on and rushed to New York on a special tug. I read all this to Helen, who provided me with a sort of laugh by saying 'If this sort of thing has got to be done no country can do it so well.'

"At the first possible opportunity the reporters swarmed upon the ship, and on my way up from breakfast I was surrounded with an eager and hungry gang. When I was told to go up on the boat deck and face a battery of cameras it was only by the most supreme effort of will that I refrained from hitting out. What I did instead was to retreat to the dining saloon, make a collection of Helen, Jean and Max, and herd them up by a back way to my stateroom and barricade the door. The wolves remained outside until we were obliged to emerge, when,

like abject criminals, we walked through a lane of men to undergo the passport formalities in the library. None of us opened our mouths but as we went down the gang-plank we were riddled with the shots of the cameras which were mounted on every side. It was a damned sight worse than an air raid. We were followed every inch of the way to the car, and even then our freedom was a farce, because we were chased through the streets by taxis. Our entrance into the house was made up steps that were lined with questioning men. Not one of whom got in though. I saw to that. When the door was shut and bolted I stood at the top of the stairs with a revolver in my hand. I was in the mood to shoot at sight if I had been able to see through red. I dare not allow myself even now to write my comments on this business in plain and simple English. It would be far too plain and simple.

"Max was a prisoner for hours, and only managed to escape by sticking on a moustache and beard from a make-up box that Helen had used for private theatricals. He oozed out of the door of the tradesmen's entrance, found another bevy of reporters outside his father's house, and entered it through the area after a wrangle with a footman. I wish to heaven that we were back in far more civilized times when men shot arrows from bows.

"An hour later Max called me up on the telephone and told me that his father's condition had shown a gradual but steady improvement from the moment he had received a cable announcing the sailing date. 'But there is going to be trouble,' he said. 'I find the strongest and most ridiculous prejudice against my marrying Jean.

The whole thing's mediæval. If my father were not so intensely and emotionally serious I should feel inclined to tell him that he was forcing us back to the days of the Merchant of Venice. But he's in no fit state for sarcasm. All I can do is to wait until he is on his feet again and introduce him to Jean. I am convinced that he will withdraw all objections at the very first sight of her. If he doesn't, what then?'

"As for Jean, she, too, of course, has been on the telephone. In fact the telephone room is the one in which she spent the day. I sat with her there for an hour after lunch. The poor child is utterly unable to realize the gravity and the peculiarity of the situation. Over and over again she said to me 'What's it mean, all this? Prejudice and objection? I never heard those words. You and Mumsie have never used them. Why should Max's father? Are we living in the Dark Ages? I cannot understand. I may not be good enough to marry Max, but isn't that *his* lookout?'

"I had nothing to say. I could only listen and wonder at her astonishing point of view. If I had ventured to remind her that parents, after all, do count for something, even as things are now, she would probably have raised her eyebrows as Helen does and laughed me out of the room. I'm certain that she would have used those stultifying words which are the cause of all the difficulties, embarrassments and quarrels between parents and children today. 'I shall lead my own life. It's mine. I have to account to no one. I'm perfectly free. If I choose to break speed limits I shall bribe the traffic cop. I'm answerable to no one. I don't believe in religion.'

"Only in this way can one sum up the youthful point

of view. Why do I say youthful? It's the universal attitude of people of every age. How futile it is and absurd. No human being is free to live his own life. All of us are slaves,—mere units of a great army in which even the Commanding Officers must click heels, obey orders and carry out the irrevocable instructions of a dominating power. Science and philosophy, fumbling towards truth as they are, cannot explain or alter our earthly slavery.

"Jean dined with us tonight. It was a rather silent meal. None of us could talk before the servants. We were all afraid, I think, that they might give us away to the Press. Jean has had a mass of letters from her numerous friends, and in every one of them, it appears, she has been begged to scratch her engagement and play the game by her set. Helen's mail has been enormous, too. The refrain of all these is just the same. With one accord her correspondents use the word 'Don't,'—as though she could help herself. Secretaries of Societies, members of the Ku Klux Klan, rival social leaders, bishops and strangers from all over America, all have rushed to vent their prejudice and urge a reconsideration of 'so deplorable a marriage.' It has become an event of national importance.

"Helen's attitude, like mine, is one of impotence, and when she handed me these letters all I could do was to shrug my shoulders and say 'It's up to Jean.' Once more we mutually agreed that we must consider her happiness and let everything else go hang. In spite of this outside outburst, this frightful publicity, this amazing revival of race prejudice in which we secretly share, we hope more strongly than ever that Mr. Jacob J. Lorbenstein will

recover his health and let the marriage go through. No one knows better than we do that life without love is empty, a sort of protracted illness, a mere marking time for the moment of release.

"The effect of all these letters upon Jean is merely to make her say 'How silly these people are. Oh, Mumsie, they don't understand.'

"When I said goodnight to Helen at eleven o'clock,—we were alone in the morning room then,—she presented her cheek to me. And when I kissed it and said 'Thank you,' she laughed and put her hand on my shoulder. 'You blushed, you funny old thing,' she said, 'and if by any chance you memorize that remark, scratch out the "old." It's not true.' Whereupon she stood on the tips of her toes, and added, 'I can only reward you for your most unexpected kindness, and your humanity to Jean, like this.'

"She kissed me on the lips.

"Compensation. . . ? Oh God."

PART VIII

I

BEING unable to leave his house, in order to get some part of his daily quota of exercise by walking round and round the reservoir, or playing squash at the Club, Farquhar had spent an hour on the roof driving golf balls into a net. Gathered, crow-like, upon the steps in the street below he had seen, with anger, several of the reporters who were waiting to pounce and pester if he ventured to go out.

Having changed, and put on a more appropriate suit, he went into the morning room and was met by a footman who handed him a note. It was from Max. It said, "My father is very anxious to see you. I think you could help things tremendously by coming round at half past twelve and I should be most frightfully grateful if you can manage to do this without inconvenience. And if, by any chance, Mrs. Farquhar can join you, I am quite sure it will have quick and excellent results. My father s very much better this morning and has left his bedroom. We have declared an armistice. I mean that we have mutually agreed to put off any further discussion of the contentious subject until the doctor passes him. I can't

tell you how deeply grateful I am to you and your wife for all your kindness. Your true friend, Max."

"Well," said Farquhar to himself, "why not? We must work this thing out between us. Delay will be hard on Jean."

He went upstairs to Helen's boudoir and after a brief hesitation knocked at the door. It was not in his character to take advantage of his wife's unexpected kiss by entering her private quarters without the formal methods to which they had both subscribed. He would have been very happy to have been able to regard them as relics of the past.

It was Jean who said "Come in."

She was sitting with Helen at the breakfast table, dressed in her pyjamas. There were letters all over the floor. Obviously they had been flung there in a series of impatient gestures. They offered a definite comment on her attitude of mind. As plain as a pikestaff they bore upon them Jean's inevitable ejaculation, "Oh, Mumsie, these silly people! What the dickens have my affairs got to do with them?"

Helen, perfectly dressed so far as her hair and face were concerned, was also in pyjamas. They were pale blue and short, so that she suggested a rather dainty boy scout, or a member of one of the Modernist parties at the Lido, who intended sooner or later to take a dip in the too warm waters of the Adriatic before playing bridge under the shadow of a red and white striped tent.

They made a charming picture, and it was difficult to tell which was mother and which was daughter at a first admiring glance. There were several un-opened daily papers on the table. They stood in a neat pile exactly

as they had been placed there by Helen's maid. Farquhar had undergone the early morning horror of headlines, and so was glad that Helen and Jean had given them a miss in baulk. He kissed Jean in the same old uncle-ish manner, said good morning to his wife and drew up a chair to the table. He liked to feel that he was included in this domestic scene. It warmed him. It gave him the pleasant sensation of being, so to speak, hitched on. He was more than ever fed up with the feeling that he had been shunted to a siding.

Helen said: "Good morning, Erskine. You look very healthy today."

"He always does," said Jean. "The best looking man in New York."

Both of them welcomed his presence with equally cheery smiles.

Farquhar, beaming under these flattering remarks, came to the point at once. It had never been his habit to beat about the bush. He had no social manners and would have been an utter failure in the Diplomatic Service. He reported the receipt of Max's letter.

"What do you think?" he said. "Will you come or shall I go alone?"

In an instant Jean was on her feet.

"Let me read his letter," she said, "and then I can advise you as to whether you ought to go. How well he writes—like a scholar. If he hadn't been a musician he would have been able to make a great name for himself as an etcher or something, you know."

"Without a doubt," said Helen, quite sincerely. "He has all the talents." She thought to herself, "During all my life in New York have I ever received such a quaint

invitation as this? The Lorbenstein house! A royal command . . . It's rather exciting," she said aloud, and waited for her daughter's advice.

"Wait a minute," said Jean, with a finger on her forehead, "I haven't quite thought this over. It seems most frightfully funny to me that *I'm* left out of this. However, I think you ought to go. After all, it might not be wise to be inspected until I've had my hair cut." She laughed and ran her fingers over the back of her neck. "These bobs are the bane of one's life."

"Yes, I can be ready by half past twelve," said Helen. "What sort of frock, do you think? I'm afraid I haven't got one of the pre-knee period. But perhaps that's just as well. Mr. Lorbenstein has probably arrived at the age when he thrills at the sight of a knee."

She felt in a mischievous mood. She had had her orgy of sleep. She had completed, without interruption, every one of her matutinal exercises for the preservation of youthful lines. If Jean hadn't been in the room she would have indulged in caustic language. A few weeks ago she would no more have considered the possibility of calling on Jacob J. Lorbenstein than of standing on her head in the middle of Fifth Avenue and waving her legs about.

Farquhar ordered the car.

"It's twelve o'clock," he said. "Can you be ready in twenty minutes? We shall have to drive in a round-about way. There's a gang of reporters waiting to pounce and they mustn't know where we're going." He blazed for a moment. "We call these civilized times! If I were to ring up the nearest police station and demand that these scavengers should be cleared off my steps the only thing I should get would be an astonished 'How?' "

By straining every effort Helen reported in the hall at twenty minutes to one. And there was Farquhar, marching up and down with his hat and stick, and the well-known husband expression. One glance was enough to prove that waiting had been worth while.

"You'll have to get used to this," said Helen. "I wonder if you will."

"I haven't the slightest inclination to go into regretful elderliness in orderly bachelorhood."

Before he could put a check on his tongue he had quoted the words that she had said on the *Homeric* to Jean.

They touched a chord in her memory. Good Lord, he had not been asleep. Heavens, what else had she said? She saw the old twinkle in his eyes and ran her hand through his arm.

"Our engagement was far too short," she said. "We ought to have fallen in love."

To which he replied, "Let's make it a little longer this time. I feel younger every day."

He thought that he saw a blush. He must have had second sight. The modern woman is quite unable to perform this early Victorian feat. It's only a question of powder. Women are just the same.

Jean disturbed this by-play. She came bounding into the hall.

"Make an appointment for me," she said, "any time this afternoon, and ask Max's father to hunt up his best silk hat. I'm going to be married at the end of the week and not a second later."

"I have a hunch that you won't, my dear," said Farquhar to himself.

II

The hungry reporters pounced. Farquhar and Helen managed to elude them without a word or a blow. The chauffeur was under orders to make a wide détour. He started off down Park Avenue and drove as far as Forty-fifth Street before turning into Fifth Avenue. Here he was stuck at regular intervals while heavy crosstown traffic dashed across that chasm of rapid alterations. It seemed to Farquhar that even during the short time that he had been absent in London and Paris the demolition opposite the Plaza had changed the face of the town. It looked more than ever as though a bombardment had taken place. An army of workmen, some of them doubtless related to people in Fiesole and Florence, were battering down the remainder of the Netherlands and Savoy. A hundred shattering noises rose with the dust.

At the pompous house in Fifth Avenue they had once again to dodge. Here, also, were men who were hanging about for the crumbs of news out of which to concoct the ghastly thing that the papers call "a story." To a question that came from a face that was poked within an inch of his own, as to whether the marriage of his daughter was really going through, Farquhar replied, with amazing restraint, "I advise you to eat more fruit!"

The door was opened by a footman whose smile denoted amusement. It was closed against a rush.

"Say that Mr. and Mrs. Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar are here, and are sorry to be late."

"Very good, sir, kindly walk this way."

The hall was large and lofty, and in the most excellent taste. It might have been that of one of the old palaces

on the Grand Canal. Tapestries covered the walls and a Fifteenth Century table immediately caught the eye. Over the high carved mantelpiece there was a beautiful Raeburn, a portrait of Sir Dudley Litchfield in military uniform. The rugs were beautiful and priceless, mellow, toned by the hand of time. In the ante-room there were half a dozen family portraits by Laszlo, Harris Brown and Lavery, and one of an elderly small man which would have been recognized by Farquhar as a Sargent if it had been painted with a more vindictive hand.

Here, with rather mixed feelings, Helen and Farquhar waited.

"If the house is all like this," said Helen, "I think we're in for a fight."

Farquhar took her point. It was obvious that she intended to convey the fact that they were about to face a man to whom the inferiority complex was altogether unknown. Here was culture as well as wealth, the keenest sense of beauty as well as pride of race.

"Yes," he said, "things look badly for Jean. Did you ever suppose in your most imaginative moment that you and I might wait with a certain humbleness to sponsor the cause of our daughter with the son of a Jew?"

Helen shook her head. "Humbleness," she said. "That word has never been in my dictionary before."

"Rather a good thing, perhaps, that it is included in it now."

"I begin to think you're right." She turned to him with a slightly mischievous smile. "Old, old," she said, using his frequent word.

But it didn't seem amusing to Farquhar, although he had said so shortly before that he felt younger every day.

Whether the final outcome of their partnership in trouble led to a different relationship between his wife and himself, and he hoped to God that it would, the fact remained that he was in the veteran class, a mere looker-on at the game of passion, and he added "damn" to that.

The footman returned, said "If you please," and was followed by the Farquhars up a noble flight of stairs. On the second landing they noticed another Raeburn, several Romneys, two Gainsboroughs of his best period, and a Hoppner which Farquhar had tried to buy when it was up for sale at Christie's. As they went nearer to a room on the right they heard the sound of a piano, stopped the footman from going in, and drew up at the door. They did not wish to disturb the music until Max had finished playing one of his father's favourite pieces, as they rightly judged it to be.

The door was ajar, however, and from the chair in which he was sitting Mr. Lorbenstein could see that his visitors were waiting for Max to come to the end.

"Whatever else they may be," he said to himself, "these are considerate people. One rarely meets them now."

When they entered finally one barrier had broken down.

He was a small man, dapperly dressed. There was nothing about his face or figure that remotely resembled his son's. His head was large, round, and almost entirely hairless, and his eyes were grey and keen under beetling eyebrows. His skin was noticeably pink and white, like that of a country girl; a small moustache was clipped very close to his lip. He might have been a brother of Punch if he had been inclined to stoutness. As it was his figure was strangely youthful for a man of seventy-two. He went every day to his office and worked

from nine to six, but the wear and tear of high finance had stamped no lines on his face. The father of a large family he had been a widower for several years. In spite of his recent illness he appeared to possess the energy, springiness, and love of life of a man of half his age.

He waited until Max had finished, raised his finger to prevent him from playing another piece, and rose. When Farquhar and Helen entered he went to meet them with quick, short steps and a courteous smile.

"It is kind of you to come," he said. "I wish that I could have had the privilege of sparing you this trouble. But I have been ill you see, it is my excuse."

He spoke English rather pedantically with a slight suggestion of the German guttural accent. His weakness for pretty women was shown by his immediate tribute to Helen. After having bowed once he waited, silent for an appreciable second, and bowed again. If his daughter Ruth had been in the room she would have burst out laughing in her jolly fat way and shot a wink at Max.

As for Max he hurried forward with boyish eagerness and spoke in French. It was his habit in moments of excitement.

"Is it a week or a month since I saw you last?" he said. "I have missed you both. And as for the deck tennis, our walks and talks, all the fun in the gymnasium and Jean . . ." He threw up his hands. "I shall always remember that crossing with a great delight."

And at the completion of an exuberant greeting he put his arm round his father's shoulder in a warm embrace. Mr. Lorbenstein patted his cheek as though he were still in the nursery.

The unaffected devotion of these two, which was so

utterly unlike that, in its outward expression, of a father and son of Anglo-Saxon blood, seemed to be perfectly natural and appropriate to them and that Italian house.

With a murmured apology for his parental self-indulgence, the little gentleman pointed to a chair.

"Pray sit down," he said.

The group dissolved.

Farquhar, wishing that he could work off superfluous energy by pacing about the room, drew up a deep armchair.

Helen sat on a high one, with her lovely shoulders square. Max assisted his father to a place on the sofa and stood behind it with his arms on the back.

The roar of traffic in the Avenue rose up from the street.

Then followed a bout of general and pleasant conversation—the weather, building activity in the city, the traffic problem, which made it necessary for Mr. Lorbenstein to leave twenty minutes earlier every morning in order to reach his office by car before the first of the clerks had arrived. Music, especially in connection with the symphony concerts at Carnegie Hall and the question of visiting conductors. The failure of the Opera to produce new singers to fill the deplorable spaces left by Caruso and Geraldine Farrar—dear Gerrie. The coal problems both in America and England; pictures, and the extraordinarily high prices which had been paid recently at various auction sales.

It was at this point that Farquhar talked about a Corot, which Mr. Lorbenstein had bought through his agents in London. Where was it? He would love to see it. Whereupon, with the triumph of the keen collector in

his eyes, Mr. Lorbenstein sprang to his feet and said, "You shall. I shall show it to you."

With great geniality he led the way across that beautiful room, in which everything was a gem, to the little elevator on the landing. The overflow of an ever-growing collection of paintings, prints, etchings, china and marbles was here. Mr. Lorbenstein went up with Helen, paying her compliments with old-fashioned gallantry.

Farquhar walked with Max, lingering on the wide staircase to admire a landscape or a portrait. He was in his element in that house, and, like the others, had forgotten for a moment the gravity and importance of the meeting.

Happy, eager, and delighted that everything was going smoothly, Max led the way into the picture gallery—or rather the series of galleries which occupied the top floor of the house.

And here, regardless of time, Farquhar and Helen, with Max at their heels, were led from one masterpiece to another by the beaming old gentleman who loved them all. In Farquhar he knew that he had a brother collector of equal taste, enthusiasm, and discrimination, and, perhaps, of equal wealth. His joy in showing off his possessions to such a man did him more good than all the bottles of tonic which his doctor had prescribed. Had Farquhar not been so keenly interested in the exhibits he might have been amused at Helen's attitude. His admiration for her tact and charm must have been hugely increased.

It was bravely and splendidly done on her part. Nothing bored her so much, after the first few moments, as a solemn march from picture to picture, with expert talk

about colour, composition, tone, chiaroscuro and all the rest of it. She adored old and beautiful things, and her flair for being able to put her finger unerringly on what was priceless and exquisite amounted almost to genius. She had an instinct for antiques, an uncanny intuition, independent of reason or experience, by which she was guided, without hesitation, to whatever was most rare and lovely wherever it might be. But she preferred to worship alone, to be in solitary confinement with anything that gave her artistic emotion and touched her sense of perfection with an answering note.

It was not until Max stood in front of one of his father's latest acquisitions, a Gainsborough, in which was represented a group of charming children of various ages gathered about the central figure of a beautiful matron, and cried out "My God, there's Jean! Isn't that child like Jean!" that Mr. Lorbenstein's genial smile froze upon his face. Turning away coldly from Farquhar he walked to the middle of the room, and there, with his hands behind his back, took up an aloof position, tight-lipped and lowering.

Max could have bitten his impetuous tongue. It was his great hope that the introduction of the Farquhars to his father might pass off in the friendliest manner and without a single reference to what he had called the contentious subject. He had been warned by the doctor not to touch upon anything for several days which might upset the equilibrium of his patient.

"Damn, damn," he said to himself, "what have you done, you fool, you idiot?" He tried to swing back the conversation to its glasslike smoothness at the point where his thoughtless trick had shattered it.

But the old man had been jarred by this sudden reference to the girl whose unexpected, and, to him, tragic advent, had broken down his health.

"I know that I am required to treat myself as an invalid," he said, "but it is difficult for me to do so. I have never before been ill."

Max broke in, quickly and tenderly.

"It's time for your soup, dear," he said. "Shall we go down?" And he took his father's hand, fondled it and tried to draw him to the door.

But Mr. Lorbenstein was used to having his own way. He held his ground with dignity and determination.

"Certain things are on my mind," he said. "I may not see Mr. and Mrs. Farquhar again. I must state my position to them before they go, so that they shall know exactly where I stand."

As though about to deliver a short address to a deputation or a meeting of directors and give his opinion on a question of finance, he took his stand at the end of a table with the tips of peculiarly spatulate fingers on the edge of it.

"I love my son," he said. "I have been his father and his mother. He is the youngest of my beloved children. I have always thought that my dear wife, who died when he was born, gave to him more of herself, her beauty and her gifts than to my other sons and daughters. I have no doubt, especially now that I have had the pleasure of meeting you, that the young lady whose name my son has mentioned is a charming and beautiful girl. I know perfectly well of her high position in American society and that the name she bears is old in this country and without blemish. Nevertheless, I must tell you at

once that I cannot permit her marriage to my son. He is a Jew, and his wife and children must belong to my race and my faith."

Max broke in again, and Helen tried to say something which might help to swing the subject into a less difficult tangent.

It was a failure. Mr. Lorbenstein intended to continue.

"Ever since I have lived in this country I have suffered daily from the dislike and suspicion of your people. Their racial prejudices and intolerance have almost made me regard myself as a perpetual stranger, an alien, and it is true to say that I have been permitted to make a niche for myself in America only by sheer indomitable courage and persistence. I remain a man without a country. I am a pariah dog."

His voice broke and tears came into his eyes.

And Max, fearful of the effects of this emotion, put both arms about his father and tried to steer him off.

"Please, please," he said, "my dearest father . . ."

Mr. Lorbenstein moved away and raised his finger.

"I will go on," he said. And after a pause during which he seemed to turn back to the page upon which he had made his notes he found his place and continued.

"I have endured great humiliations. I have suffered much pain. Over and over again I have been treated as though I were an inferior being. Let me make it clear, however, that it is not because I rankle under an infinite number of insults that I say to you now that my permission to the marriage of my son to your daughter shall never be obtained. It is because I, too, entertain racial prejudices and am intolerant. It is because I am as

proud of my Jewish blood and the inheritance of the faith of my fathers as you Christians are of yours. My son has lived abroad and mixed with those who love him for his music and his handsome face. He has been bitten by the germ of modern indifference and is a cosmopolite. He chooses to think that there is no difference between race and race, one faith and another. Nevertheless, he is my son. And, as such, in spite of momentary infatuation and forgetfulness, will remain loyal to me, his people and his faith. He will recover, after living again in this house, the loyalty and deep affection for his family which is inherent to the Jew. At whatever cost to himself he will obey the call of his blood."

Although there was deep emotion in all this, it was said with the greatest economy of gesture and a finality which permitted of no argument. Arrived at his peroration the old man bowed, with old-fashioned courtesy, first to Helen and then to Farquhar.

He let them see quite plainly that the interview was at an end.

III

And it would have been at an end if, under the stress of an indignation which made him forget the doctor's injunctions, Max had not flung himself into the argument.

"My dear father," he said, treating Mr. Lorbenstein not as an old man to be petted and cajoled, but as an unreasonable Diehard of middle-aged strength, "you can't dismiss this thing with a burst of dictatorial rhetoric

and expect me to bow before it like an awed and timid schoolboy. Nor can you crush the happiness of two people by raising a persecuting hand. What you call the germ of modern indifference has infected me with a feeling of kindness, of the spirit of live and let live, and has killed whatever was in me of the racial prejudice from which you have suffered so much. And when you talk about infatuation you use the wrong word. It's more than that, it's love."

The whole rhythm of this hitherto quiet and restrained interview altered and became staccato.

"I say that it shall not be," said Mr. Lorbenstein, stamping his small foot and raising his voice for the first time. "I will not have it. Mr. and Mrs. Farquhar are here today, in a state of perplexity and sentimentality, but I know that they are with me in everything that I have said. They can no more conceive the possibility of a union between their family and mine than I can between my family and theirs." He turned to Helen, probably because he recognized in her, as in most women, the mistress of her family. "Is not this so?"

Helen was tempted to be honest, and to say that she and Farquhar had undergone several weeks of horror at the thought of what must happen to Jean as the wife of a Jew. Under any other circumstance it would have been the right moment for her to explain to this proud old man the utter crash of their plan to bring about the assumption of their name by the man who married Jean, and further to have pointed out as an incontestable fact that Jean's marriage was just as serious and important to them as that, for instance, of Lady Cynthia Montpelier to the Duke and Duchess of Knightsbridge. But she

kept herself under great restraint, remembering that she was standing in front of a man who had only just recovered from a nervous breakdown. Breeding told as it always does, and so she weighed her words.

She said: "I am bound to confess that I thought as you do before I met your son, and convinced myself that he is as much in love with Jean as she is with him. If this were a mere infatuation I should range myself with you and do everything under the sun to prevent this affair from going any further. But it isn't, Mr. Lorbenstein, it isn't. There is a great and beautiful love between these two, a true and enviable love. And it is this that has made me decide to rise above prejudice and intolerance and put sympathy and kindness in their places."

More Latin than he had ever been, Max bent forward, seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips. He was unable to do more than murmur incoherent thanks.

Mr. Lorbenstein appealed to Farquhar.

"I am to understand that that is your conclusion, too?"

To which Farquhar said, "Yes, I agree with my wife."

The old man was amazed and for a moment speechless.

"But," he said, stammering a little, "you and I have lived almost next door to each other for a number of years, and have employed the same agent in the purchase of pictures. And yet this is the first time that you have recognized my existence or come under my roof. Sympathy and kindness! It is late to use such words."

"Father, I must ask you . . ."

But the old man waved his son away.

"Then I stand with my back to the wall," he said. "All three of you are against me. But I will speak my thoughts." He addressed himself to Helen, talking

quickly and with heat. "As one who is a social leader in this city I have sent to you, over and over again, the most polite invitations to meet the members of charitable organizations in my ballroom. You have answered them invariably with excuses. Never in your life, not once, have you condescended to enter this house, or to entertain in yours, myself, the members of my family or a single person against whom there might be levelled the charge of his having Jewish blood. That is true?"

"Perfectly true," said Helen, "except that, of course, like other New York women, I have broken the barrier from time to time in favour of a pet Jew."

Mr. Lorbenstein gave an angry scoff.

"I shall not forget, Mrs. Farquhar, that it was through you, on behalf of the Colony Club, that my eldest daughter was informed that she could not become a member in spite of the fact that her money and devotion had been lavished upon its work for our army in time of war. That is true?"

"Perfectly true," said Helen.

"And yet you say, at this late hour, that you have sympathy and kindness in regard to an engagement which is detestable to you and has stirred the whole country into taking sides, simply because you do not wish to lose your daughter's love by making her unhappy. Is this fair or consistent? Above all is it wise?"

"It isn't fair and it isn't consistent," she cried out, "but when you ask me if it's wise, all I can say is 'Yes.'" There was a tremble about her lips. "You've been surrounded with love, Mr. Lorbenstein, but if you were to look at this business with my eyes and those of my husband you wouldn't dare to allow such a thing as

prejudice to enter into it. Under the circumstances I beg you to forgive me if I've hurt your feelings and consent to a marriage which is more likely to be made in heaven than any I have known."

"Consent!" said Farquhar. "My dear sir, we are dealing with two young people who are not only in love but who are modernists. You must bear in mind that we, as parents, whatever may be our deep-rooted convictions and objections, will not be asked to consent. That word is out of date."

"Then, too," said Helen, fighting this strange battle in the cause of humanity, "aren't you making a mountain out of a mole hill? Isn't racial prejudice, even in America, the hobby merely of the few remaining old-fashioned people? There are, after all, you know, many instances in New York which prove that money or genius have wiped out the old objections to the marriage of Jews and Christians. Max has both. As in these other cases all doors will fly open at the mention of his name."

Without an instant's hesitation or weakness, Mr. Lorbenstein gave his answer.

"It is true," he said, "that money has bought a certain superficial tolerance among you when a Jew has married into New York society. Money is worshipped here. And genius is a universal passkey. But a Jew is always a Jew whether he is disloyal to his race and faith or not. He may change his name and worship the Christian God, but in spite of his wealth and what it will give, the prejudice remains. He is a fool who hopes ever to buy the genuine tolerance of a people among whom he has been, and always will be loathed, envied, despised, and feared. Racial prejudice is not the hobby of the old-fashioned or

the careless. It is stronger and more bitter today than at any time. It is organized. There are leagues and societies in existence that are fanning it into flames. Crucifixion is still in fashion and persecution is practised as in the days of religious wars. I am a proud man. I, too, have prejudice. I say, finally, that I will do everything in my power to prevent this marriage. You may have no influence where your daughter's desires are concerned, but, if my son flouts parental authority and is disloyal to me and his race, he will eventually stand before God with my death upon his soul."

He turned away, thrust Max's appealing hand aside, and with quicker and shorter steps than ever, left the room.

"My God," thought Farquhar, "what will this mean to Jean?"

If he had married Helen for love, and had lived in happiness with her all his life, he might have asked himself a very different question at that moment. Unselfishness is brought about by suffering. Consideration for the happiness of others by an infinite amount of pain. Life, as he was beginning to understand, is the apprenticeship to progressive renunciation, to the steady lessening of claims, hopes, powers, prejudices, and liberty.

IV

Like wasps under the seduction of marmalade a dozen reporters, suddenly revived, swarmed on the Farquhar car.

"Say nothing. Keep a perfectly noncommittal face."

"Very good, my master," said Helen, with imitation

deference. She had never taken orders before, nor had any living creature ventured to give them—not even Jean.

Farquhar trod on several feet—the centre of a scrum. He used his elbows so that he might blaze a lane for his wife. Along this Helen made her way calmly and quietly, with a Marie Antoinette expression and her eyes on her house.

Ignoring the bombardment of questions Farquhar followed, used Helen's latch key, passed her in and slammed the door.

The defeated scavengers were utterly unable to understand the continued refusal to accept publicity. Everyone else courted and went to every length to obtain it. What in hell was the great idea?

Jean had watched the return of her father and mother. It seemed to her that they had been away too long. There wasn't the vaguest suggestion of anxiety in her mind. She and Max intended to be married. Wasn't that enough? Life was theirs. They owned it. She had been waiting for lunch and was hungry and so she flew into the hall.

"I had almost given you up," she said. "Do you want to starve your wee ewe lamb?"

"Awfully sorry," said Farquhar.

In the look that he gave to his wife he tried to convey his bewilderment and ask her advice. To the direct and logical Jean such a thing as intolerance was silly and childish. In what sort of words then could he attempt to explain the blind alley into which they had come?

Helen signalled, "Leave it to me," said, "I'm frightfully hungry, too," and put her arm round Jean's shoulder.

With the air of one who had enjoyed an amusing and interesting hour, from which, however, she was glad to have escaped, she headed for the dining room and took her place. It was a relief to know that nothing could be said before the servants. She had time in which to eat in peace and consider her report.

She was one of those highly civilized women in whom the instincts of sleep and hunger were wholly primitive. Just as she was bound to sleep her full through storms and tribulations, there was no conceivable crisis sufficiently disturbing to prevent her from putting her teeth into meat under the pangs of hunger. Her mental and physical health were brilliantly excellent.

The meal was served with velvety smoothness and the sort of leisurely speed with which even Farquhar, a despot in these matters, could find nothing to cavil at.

Yes, Max was well and his father distinctly better. A wonderful old man. "An aristocrat," said Farquhar. A quite amazing house—a museum and a home combined. Taste, beauty, cultivation, leisure, charm, affection. It had them all. The conversation remained general and undangerous because Jean's numerous eager questions never touched upon the matter of hostility. She appeared to have forgotten the wording of the cable from Max's sister and to regard the newspaper publicity, the amazement and indignation of her friends, with mild amusement and surprise. It was not until they adjourned to the morning room for coffee, and Farquhar shut the door and took up his usual place with his back to the fireplace, undisturbed by the presence of servants and the sound of the telephone, that Helen came to the point. And then not with her usual courage. She had never been called

upon to throw a bomb into the middle of anyone's Paradise, and this was one in which Jean, her blessed Jean, had been walking with so much joy.

Assisted by Farquhar, who came quietly up to the scratch, in his usual reliable way, she told Jean precisely what had been said after Max had mentioned her name. She brought her statement to an end by saying, "And so you see, darling, things are by no means easy. Mr. Lorbenstein isn't vindictive or revengeful. We could win him out of that. He isn't getting back at me, and through me at the whole of prejudiced New York, because we've ignored his existence. It's a question of pride and caste. He has exactly the same prejudice against us as Christians as we have had against him and his people as Jews. And he left us finally, stultified and helpless, after he had said that Max would be responsible for his death if he married out of his race."

"Which might have been dismissed as melodrama or blackmail if said by anyone else," said Farquhar. "But coming from that old man it was the simple truth."

Lying full stretch on a sofa with her hands behind her head Jean listened to her father and mother without a single interjection. For the first time it dawned upon her that they had made a huge sacrifice on her behalf. In order that she might be happy she saw now that they had, in a way, achieved something which the League of Nations was striving to bring about. They had overcome intolerance and race prejudice, thrown down deep-rooted objections and conquered pride in the face of ruined plans, in order that she might marry the man she loved and who had given his love to her.

After a thoughtful pause she rose, went to her father

and kissed him, and having done so with greater affection than she had ever shown before, put her arms round her mother's waist and her head on her breast.

To say that these two were astonished would not describe their feelings. They had not expected tears of anger or despair—Jean was not one of the weepy sort—but, judging by the attitude that she had adopted hitherto, they had been prepared for a burst of incredulous impatience, of scorn, and ridicule at Mr. Lorbenstein's stand.

As well as emotion there was the old look of perplexity and bewilderment on their faces.

Jean provided an explanation. She said, in a not very steady voice, "Is every girl as great an egotist as I've been? And as selfish and ungrateful? I suppose so. If we don't get all those things in when we're young we may never have the chance. While you were telling me what exactly happened, you didn't mean to let me see all that you have given up. But somehow or other I saw it. A flash of unusual intelligence! For that, for everything in Paris and on the ship, I'm—I'm awfully, awfully grateful. You've been most frightfully sporting—though that's a feeble word—and I shall never forget."

Her voice broke rather badly, and she hid her face against her mother's cheek. It was a pity, because she might otherwise have seen how grateful her "naughty little sister" and the man to whom she had referred as "him" were for *her* gratitude, so simply and slangily expressed. From a member of the younger generation it was a great reward for services rendered—a most unexpected thing.

Then Jean stood up and pulled herself together. She had never shown so close a resemblance to Farquhar and

Helen before. They saw each other in her and it gave them a curious thrill.

She said, "Let's go into this. It's difficult and rather frightful. Of course it's the most serious thing that I've ever had to face."

"Yes," said Helen, "it is."

Feeling, warmly, like one of the family, a recognized member of that anxious threesome, Farquhar chimed in too. "We'll worry it out," he said.

"All these letters from my friends at school and the fuss the papers are making make me feel a bit of a freak," said Jean. "And yet I found out that I belong to the stuffed canary period when I was talking to mother in Paris. All the same—I don't know why—I've never disliked the Jews. I know that I've met very few—two or three boys and their sisters who went everywhere in the winter. They were sneered at behind their backs, and jokes were made about them, and I remember Tony saying that they had only managed to get in because their fathers were international bankers. But they were amusing, and nice, and I liked them, just as I should have liked them if they had been English or French or Russian. There was a difference in manner and looks, something a little foreign, but that was interesting and made them come as a change. The only prejudice I've got is for loud and vulgar people, and there were several girls at school I did my best to avoid. And so it never occurred to me that you or anyone else would have anything to say against Max. Does that mean that I'm careless, unfastidious, or what?"

"No," said Farquhar. "It means that you're God knows how many years in advance of these uncivilized times. Far beyond me as I felt several weeks ago. If

everyone had your tolerance there might be peace in the world."

"What can we do?" asked Helen.

"I don't quite know," said Jean.

She was quiet and grave. There was an air about her of responsibility and courage. Thinking hard, she took one or two turns across the room. It was her father's trick. And in the way in which she put her right elbow into her left hand and a thumb against her chin she reproduced unconsciously a habit of her mother's.

As Helen and Farquhar watched her, and recognized their individual characteristics, the growing bond between them strengthened and grew tighter.

Finally she said, facing them both, "Mumsie, you and father have done everything you can. You have been wonderful and splendid. And I love you. The rest is up to me—and I shall fight."

"Good," said Farquhar.

Helen waved her hand.

"But I shall have to carry Max because his father is old and may be ill again. It will always be my job to carry Max. He is too sensitive and high-strung to be asked to tackle problems. He needs protection, encouragement, laughter, and all the care in the world. He walks with his feet an inch or two from the earth. . . . It seems to me that there are two ways in which to go through this. The almost unbearable way, which I can force myself to endure, is to remain unmarried but engaged to Max and simply hover around him. Sooner or later his father will have lived his life and then we can be married. The other is to go straight in to Mr. Lorbenstein and, without any wrangling or argument, simply let him see that I was born

for Max, and that although I don't happen to be a member of his race, I am a perfectly nice person who is endowed with the special gift of looking after his son—— How does that seem to you?"

She looked from Helen to her father and back to Helen. How could Farquhar be jealous of her giving a greater trust to her mother than she gave to him?

Helen steadied her voice and achieved something suggesting a smile. There was pain in front of this child. She said, "Try the latter way first." There was heartbreak in the other.

And Farquhar asked, "Do you think that he will see you?"

Jean's chin took on a tilt. "I can call there every day until I wear him down."

"Why not ask Max to work it?"

"Very brainy, Mumsie. I'll go and ring him up." She went to the door and turned. "I have a faint idea of a plan. I shall make my first assault this afternoon at four o'clock. I'll tell Max to tell the servants that he expects me and ask him to be playing to his father at the moment I arrive. The rest must be left to the inspiration of the moment. With music and something of Mumsie I may carry the outer gate."

She laughed with a ring of excitement, opened the door, and ran.

V

Jacob J. Lorbenstein's library led into the music room. At half past three, acting on Jean's instructions, Max

tiptoed up to the piano, leaving the door ajar. His father was still napping, sitting upright in his chair. His hands were folded and his shiny head was rising and falling as though his neck was on a spring. He had refused to acknowledge the urge to sleep and make himself comfortable.

Every working afternoon for sixty years he had been at his desk. He resented the illness which had kept him at home. He resented the break in his rigid régime. "I will not lie down," he said.

From where Max sat at the piano, playing Schumann and Schubert, his father's German favourites, he could see the indomitable old man, nodding, and sometimes beating time. He was very small and neat. Against the background of old dark books his face looked pinker than usual. His knees were close together and his feet—peculiarly small feet in boots with elastic inlets—placed side by side. He kept himself in an attitude of briefly arrested attention so that he might not be caught with the appearance of feebleness.

Jean slipped into the music room at the moment when the sound of his favourite airs had carried Mr. Lorbenstein all the way back to his youth. Only half conscious he was sitting in the parlour of his future father-in-law with Rachel's head on his knee, while her brother, a fine musician, played the masterpieces of the family's country with native sentiment. The scene that morning with the Farquhars and their talk of love and marriage, and, more obviously, the presence of the son who was the last of his wife's precious gifts, had touched the vibrations of his own young days. The music completed the illusion.

Max halted Jean with a quick gesture and called her

with his eyes, and while he continued to play with deep emotion and feeling, he whispered, "Creep to his chair, put your head on his knee and his hand to your lips. I think we're going to be helped."

For what seemed to be a long time Jean sat on the floor, with one leg dead, and a little pain in one shoulder. And all the while Max played like a man inspired, like a maker of dreams, calling back the spirit of his mother so that she might touch his father's heart with kindness and let him see himself and her in the two young things whose only desire was to be permitted to repeat a story of love and faithfulness in the same good way.

With his eyes shut and his heart warm Mr. Lorbenstein sat once more in the red velvet parlour with his hand on the head of the vivid dark-haired girl who was soon to be his wife. He was a young man, confident and courageous. He was liked and respected by Rachel's family. Already his untiring efforts had born fruit. His financial genius was recognized. He was stamped with the indelible mark of success. His dynamic energy and relentless application to business had made him many friends in Wall Street.

It was in his power to place the girl who loved and believed in him in surroundings far more gorgeous and luxurious than those in which she had been brought up. He was pleased with himself. He could pat himself on the shoulder and say, "Jacob, the world is at your feet. Your children shall be rich, my fine fellow, and before very long you will be able to buy the works of those other geniuses for whom the rich compete. Rachel shall be a great lady, admired and envied by her people, and there shall be love as well as beauty in your house."

The music ceased, and when, with the most painful reluctance, the old man opened his eyes and fell through the filmy fabric of his dream into old age and a sense of trouble, he saw that the youngest of his children was gazing at him with appeal through his fringe of black hair, his pale face wet from his effort, and that the spirit of his wife had taken on the shape of a slim sweet girl whose hair was golden and whose eyes were blue, and in whose expression he saw an immediate likeness to the man and woman who epitomized the enemies of his race.

He was shocked. He had been tricked and played with. He was old and it was cruel. But when he tried to snatch away his hand it was held more warmly against a young cheek, and the anger in his heart was made shameful by the head that nestled against it.

And when, with the utmost simplicity of young emotion, Max left the instrument on which he had worked his magic and threw himself on his knees at the old man's other side, wrapping one arm about his shoulder, he sat with a hanging head, and presently tears came through the hard stucco of prejudice which had been encrusted upon him by bitter persecution.

Nothing was said except by Max who, kissing his father from time to time, murmured endearing words. Mr. Lorbenstein and his son were too greatly moved by the gravity and sentiment under which they laboured to say articulate things. And Jean was too fearful of breaking the working of the spell to venture on a word. But between the father and son the silent mutual confession of love and sympathy, appeal and consent, brought about under the gentle influence of the lingering spirit of Rachel, was enough. And it was only when, at last, the old man

said, "My dear, my dear," kissed Jean and with a lovely touch of unconscious but characteristic drama gave her hand to Max that she let herself go and spoke.

"I promise that you shall never regret," she said.

After a merry tea and two songs in German by Mr. Lorbenstein, who was very fond of singing, and did so with feeling and taste but a rather breathless voice—before all of which Jean, in a Helen mood, had caused much laughter on the top of tears by trying comically to recover her leg—the old man escorted Jean to his car, and said to the waiting reporters, in a loud voice, "Yes, the marriage will be," and went up in the lift to his picture gallery to spend an hour with the work of the other geniuses that he had bought by the sweat of his brow. He felt, with triumph, that he had conquered not a market, and not a trust, but himself.

Max gave vent to his joy on the piano. What would have happened to him if the room had been filled with women it is impossible to say. He might have been torn limb from limb and eventually removed in small fragments like rosemary for remembrance.

Two hours later music led Ruth to the room.

His sister, whose cable to Paris would have remained unopened but for Farquhar's intervention, had been married for seven years. She was small, stout, vivid, downright, highly intelligent, inclined to sarcasm, startingly logical. She told the truth to her children and so was impatient of fairies. She knew the value and had discovered the limitations of money. Her pretence to a lofty scorn of barriers and enclosures was pluckily maintained. She worked off her frequent wounds by appearing in

priceless pearls and by travelling to and over Europe like a Royal Princess. Her married name was Mrs. Otto Saab.

When Max saw her cynical smile his hands froze to the keys.

"Well," she said, "I see that you've worked on Father."

She held up the evening paper. All across the front page in huge letters ran the words:

"Farquhar-Lorbenstein marriage to come off. Jacob J. blesses union of Jean and Max. Families meet in amity today. Elderly philanthropist announces verdict from Fifth Avenue mansion. Touching scenes."

The whole page under these headings, except for a small box—which contained the news of the attempted assassination of the King of Spain,—was devoted to the photographs of all concerned among the usual columns of "story."

Max nodded and there was a flash in his eyes. He put his hair back from his forehead.

"No more quarrels," he said.

Ruth laughed and dropped the paper. "Max Lorbenstein-Farquhar,—the Scottish American Jewish cosmopolitan; pianist, member of the Four Hundred; heir to the Farquhar millions—no American Clubs. A comic mixture," she said.

Max waved his hand to pass the remark aside.

"Yes," she added, "but it isn't as easy as that. Personally, I think it's rather a joke to put one over on the anti-Jew brigade. They'll have to accept you with the Farquhar hyphened on, although, of course, you would have been one of their little pets for the sake of your music in any case. But only because you could have played for

them for nothing after dinner. But presently you will be able to follow at the heels of your wife into the cold heart of Christendom and with your money added to hers buy everything but sneers. A pretty expensive buy!"

"I'm not interested," said Max. He waved his hand again. "Jean and my music and Paris, a few friends, laughter after work. That's the whole of life."

"And two or three dear little Jewish children?"

"Children, please God," he answered, "call them what you will." He ran the fingers of his right hand over the keys and made a sound like young voices.

There was pity as well as affection in Ruth's olive eyes. She watched her brother for a moment while she stood close to the piano thoughtfully, with her hands on the case. Her nails were long and pointed and red.

"I've seen your Jean," she said, "often. A lovely child, very natural and charming. Good manners, too, which isn't the fashion among her tribe. I don't wonder that you're in love, dear Max. But, quite apart from the fatal mistake of marrying a girl who isn't one of us, don't you think it would be fair to her to cultivate a cool moment and look at the whole thing from the other side of it?"

"Fair to her? I don't know what you mean." Max was becoming impatient.

"I mean the New York society side and the numerous awkwardnesses you'll place her into by making her your wife. As an artist you can't be expected to understand these things. You're not remotely interested in what you probably call the idiotic rules and codes that still linger in this city, in spite of all its changes and deteriorations and cosmopolitanism. But Jean Farquhar isn't and can't be.

Her mother has never been known to let a Jew into her house. She and her friends have never given way to the modernism of these times. They have kept their barriers up. Don't you think the day may come when Jean, who isn't an artist, will smart under the tilted noses of the set to which she belongs? I do. It's on the cards that she will resent closed doors and having to spend her life in the semi-society and nouveau riches who think that money is better than caste. And then what? A rift, my dear Max, which will widen and widen, and the entrance into it, one fine day, of a man of her own sort, with an Arrow collar face and golf clubs and Piping Rock ideas. And so, my poor old Max, I advise you to look through the chinks of the future and think of this girl from her Farquhar side before you let her in. I'm not an advocate of race prejudice. It's a cruel and wicked thing. But as one who loves you and has suffered, it's my duty to remind you that it exists and may ruin your dream. That's all I've got to say."

She left him standing against the instrument which, for the first time in his life, failed to draw his fingers to its keys.

There was fear on his soul.

PART IX

I

WHEN Mr. Lorbenstein walked sharply into his dining room two mornings later, at quarter past eight, feeling so well that he had decided to return to his office, he saw Jean sitting at the table, facing the coffee pot.

The old gentleman's heart jumped. His small and exactly similar breakfasts had been eaten in company with the *Times* and *Herald-Tribune* since Ruth had married Saab.

"Well, well, well," he cried out, extremely flattered and charmed.

The only girl whom he had ever looked forward to seeing in that cheery and companionable attitude in his lonely house was dark-haired Rachel, the daughter of one of his business associates. He had picked her out for Max. And here was one whose hair was made fairer than ever by the intrusion of the sun.

"Good morning," said Jean. "I had a hunch that you'd go to the office today, and so I thought I'd jump round, give you breakfast and raise a hearty cheer. Do you mind?"

She left her place to meet him and slipped her hand through his arm.

"Do I mind?" He laughed at the absurdity of the

question, drew up, stood on tiptoe and kissed her. "It was a lovely thought, my dear. Do it often. You won't find that I shall object. In fact, I shall endeavour to be a little bit ill every Monday to insure your companionship."

It was such a good joke that he not only enjoyed it then to the full, but made up his mind to get many more good laughs out of it by repeating it during the day.

Jean laughed too. Why shouldn't she? It was a good world.

"Now then," she said, "you haven't too much time. How many lumps and how much milk? And if you butter your toast shall I do it or will you do it yourself? You're ten seconds late, you know, and in twenty minutes the car will be at the door."

Mr. Lorbenstein paused in the act of tucking a corner of his napkin into his collar. He was delightfully astonished.

"How do you know all that?"

He had not been domestically managed for ages. It was like old times.

"I asked," said Jean drily. "Why don't you answer my questions?"

She held the coffee pot in one hand and the milk jug in the other. They had been held in a similar manner by a matron of Georgian times.

"Fifty-fifty, please. Two lumps. I'm not afraid of sugar and I persist in salt, and as you will discover I drink wine because I like it and I smoke. I am healthy because I am free from fads and rarely listen to doctors. I also overwork. You know everything—except that I don't eat butter."

"Why don't you?"

"I tremble before the black looks of my tailor."

"Vanity," said Jean.

"Of course. I am not so old!"

He was in high spirits. Max was a lucky boy.

She announced to the footman that his presence was a nuisance by passing Mr. Lorbenstein's cup. That tactful person took the hint and retired to his quarters. He wouldn't mind if Miss Farquhar looked after his old bird every blinkin' morning, he wouldn't, what do *you* think, matey?

"Father talks about being old at fifty-five. He goes about making a noise like Noah."

"Old at fifty-five? What nonsense!" Away went the top of an egg with a knife. "If I were fifty-five I'd learn to dance the Charleston and commute from the Adirondacks every morning in an aeroplane. *Old at fifty-five . . .*" He couldn't get over it. "Why doesn't he go to an office every morning and do some work?" It was on the tip of his tongue to add, "They're soft, these Anglo-Saxon drones," but he swallowed it on his toast.

In future he would refuse to give such thoughts even a corner of his brain. He had told Max at least three times already that he felt, in regard to his sudden *volte face,* like a man who had made a complete recovery from an operation for appendicitis. "My prejudice has been cut out of me," he said. "I feel lighter and better without it." As a convert to a new cause he was bound to develop into something of a fanatic. He might even join the English-speaking Union and the Pilgrims Club—if they would let him in.

"Have you noticed," asked Jean, with a laugh in her

voice, "that our names have been dropped from the papers today? There's not a line about us in any of them and reporters have melted away."

"Thank God, yes. I saw that. Everything looks good and so we're no more use. If we were quarrelling and unhappy, there would be more about us than ever. They don't like it when people have normal blood pressure. They thrive on madness, murder, anger, misery and all the horrors. If they could be brought to ignore these things, I truly believe that the public's appetite for sensation would die out very quickly. Shall you wait and see Max, my dear?"

"Oh yes, rather," she said. "But I shall let him sleep as long as he can. When I called him up last night at eleven o'clock he said that he was going to practice for an hour. I know what that means. He played all night and staggered to bed when the maid came in to dust."

Mr. Lorbenstein pushed back his chair. "I hope you will alter all that. He must have sleep, that boy."

"I know," said Jean, with the note of solemnity which had made her mother laugh. "But it will be a great mistake if I start to imitate Mussolini all at once. I've given a great deal of thought to all this and I've come to the conclusion that I must wean him out of these bachelor habits bit by bit. He must be alone with the piano. He was born for that, and the night's the best time for his practice, he says. I'm not going to be one of those wives who cause revolutions. As the guardian of a genius I must let him have his way. What I think I shall do will be to see that he has a bedroom in the quietest part of the house and cajole him to the piano earlier and earlier month by month, so that, somewhere about 1930 or so, he will

begin to work at four o'clock and be thankful for bed at eleven. Do you think that's a good idea?"

Mr. Lorbenstein took her arms and led her into the hall. He wore a beaming smile. One man was waiting with his hat and there was another at the door. He put her hand to his lips.

"All your ideas are good," he said. "Max is a lucky boy. I thank you for coming to me this morning. You have completed my cure."

He drew back, put his noticeably small feet together and bowed.

A moment later he waved his hand from the car which faced the great adventure of the streets.

II

Having told Denham, the English footman, that he was to ring her up as soon as Max gave any sign of life, Jean went home. She found Farquhar spoiling for exercise, and, with him, walked as many times round the reservoir—New York's only lung—as salved his conscience. Then she lunched with her mother and waited for the call. It came at three o'clock.

The voice was Hammersmith, the message typical of the R.F.A.

"'Ave to report that Mr. Max is in 'is bath, Miss. 'As just given orders for coffee and rolls. . . . Thank *you,* miss. Only too glad to oblige."

With unerring instinct Jean made straight for the music room in the Lorbenstein house. And there was Max at the piano, in a dressing gown and slippers. He sprang to his feet.

Instead of "Darling" she said "Coffee."

He said "Darling" and kissed her, repeating her astonishing word with the rising inflection of surprise.

She rang the bell as she spoke. "I'm absolutely certain that you put on that dressing gown, rushed to the piano and left your breakfast untouched. Think it over carefully and let me know."

He thought it over—with a finger on his forehead and a hand on the middle of his back. He had to think it over and deeply. For the life of him he couldn't remember whether he had had breakfast or not. All through the tiresome operation of shaving and while he was in the bath his fingers were itching for the piano, and music filled his brain.

Denham appeared, discreetly.

"Denham," said Jean, quite quietly, "will you please go up to Mr. Max's room and bring his breakfast down? You needn't trouble to make the coffee hot. It's hot enough."

Denham oozed away. He said to himself, "She must 'ave known all there is about hartists in a former life."

Then she said, "Darling" and kissed him and laughed at his abject admiration of her prescience.

"I can only play the piano," he said humbly. "You can conduct a full orchestra and get the best out of every instrument. I resign my position of infant prodigy to you."

She accepted his approval and was pleased. But she said, "I don't put up as a prodigy, Max, and I burst out of infancy when I heard you play. I shall be quite content as the wife of Lorbenstein, and one of my many jobs will be to see that you begin the day well with breakfast, even if it's time for tea."

At which, splashed suddenly by the backwash of his sister's warning, he put his hands on her shoulders and looked into her eyes. "Think that over carefully," he said, "and let me know." Then, rather paler than usual, he turned away and went to the flamboyant mantelpiece which framed his romantic figure.

If it had not been for his extreme seriousness and uncharacteristic withdrawal Jean would have laughed. During the short time that she had known him he had reserved all seriousness for music, which was his religion. At other times he had laughed and talked about nothing, had gone out in his car to enjoy the exhilaration of movement and crowds and plunged into the studios of his experimental friends. In between, frequently, he had made fawn-like love and whispered ecstatic and poetic things, always, as Jean had said to her mother, an inch or two off the ground. He had had his moods of deep depression, but these had been brought on not by brain fag, fear, or the sudden realization of the world's pain, jealousy, hostility, and resentment, but by the illness and bitterness of the masters whose music he interpreted, which sometimes came to him so strongly that he played through blinding tears. There were agonies in the music of Chopin and Wagner, for instance, which he would never venture to reproduce, except in solitude. They were too sacred in the baring of soul, too dreadfully personal in an outburst of confession.

And so Jean was greatly astonished and perplexed. But she was not one to let anything slide by unexplained. She had no use for mysteries, ambiguities, or hints. Like her father she was direct. Everything had to be translated into simple words. She had a passion for truth.

She said, "What do you mean by that?"

To which, seeing that he had uncovered the well which, as a rule, he much preferred to hide behind decorative bushes and a bank of flowers, Max, from a sense of duty and honour, faced what was known as a show-down. His sister's warning had stuck like a plaster.

"As to your being content as the wife of Lorbenstein," he said. "I ask you to think that over carefully and let me know."

Jean went a few steps nearer and stopped. "I don't understand a bit," she said. "Say what you're thinking, exactly." She wasn't angry or sharp—merely amazed.

It wasn't easy. Now that he had come to it the sensitive Max saw ingratitude and disloyalty like two black clouds.

"What I'm thinking isn't anything that belongs to me," he answered, worrying it out. "It's something that has been put in my mind. It's something that came as a shock, like hitting one's head against a beam in the dark."

He looked at her for help. He hoped that she would shoot another question at him upon which he might hang a reply.

But all she said was, "Go on."

"I want you to look into the future," he said, blundering. "I mean beyond excitement and romance and out on the other side—the long side, which may be disappointing and dull. I shall have my work—harder and harder work, and recitals all over the map. Ships, trains, and long journeys, Paris in between. Lorbenstein, musician and egotist." He threw out his hand.

"Well?"

It was more and more difficult. There she stood, ut-

terly undramatic, with quiet logical eyes in which he thought he could see the growing glimmer of amusement.

"I'm trying to think about you—I mean later. With nothing to do. Out of New York mostly, out of your mother's set. Among singers and artists and unfashionable people. Simply and wholly the wife of Lorbenstein." And, after a pause during which he felt that her amusement increased, he added, "Jew."

And then in a flash she was on him. With her hands on his shoulders she turned his face to the window.

"Somebody's been talking bosh," she said. "Who is it? I know that it isn't your father. I'm a friend of his. There's nothing double-faced about him. Who was the beam in the dark?"

He shook his head. "What does it matter? I'm trying to think about you."

"But is that something new? Haven't you ever thought about me?"

"Oh God," he replied, and threw his arms round her.

She held him for a moment. He was trembling with suppressed emotion. He had endeavoured to conduct this thing like an Englishman, a Christian, or as Farquhar would do it. Not as he, characteristically dramatic, and as one who had lived in Paris and thought in French, would have attacked the matter but for his sister, and the sudden sense of inferiority caught from her, hitherto strange in him.

"All right, I see," she said, soothingly. "Somebody, probably a woman, most likely one of your sisters, has been talking to you 'for your own good'. In other words making mischief. The Jew versus Christian tosh was dragged up to make you unhappy and it made you un-

happy, although you've never given it a thought. In fairness to me it was so kindly pointed out that bit by bit I should resent your glory and get frightfully bored by merely standing in its reflection. Being a working wife would lead me into mischief after humdrum had taken 'passion's place.' After all, you were begged to remember, the dear girl 'is the daughter of a society leader, the lovely Mrs. Farquhar, with New York fawning at her feet.' Won't there come a time, my poor Max, when *she* will want to lead, when she will want to 'express herself' and, even against her will, drift into the arms of a square-shouldered person in plus fours who will lift her on to the dais that she has always stood below?"

Max kissed her on the lips, and drew her heart to her mouth. "I said that you're the infant prodigy of the family," he cried out, between laughter and tears. He shook his finger at her. "Either that or it's my painful duty to point out that listening at the keyhole isn't done any more."

"I'm right," she said. "It was Ruth, the night before last, shortly after I left. I noticed a rather queer flatness in your voice when I rang up to say 'God bless you.' "

It was hopeless to get back to his stand. She had cut its legs away. All the same there had been so sharp an edge to his sister's ridicule—the Lorbenstein-Farquhar touch—so deathly a sting in her mouth when she had drawn that picture of the Piping Rock young man, that Max harped on his feeble string. He would sacrifice himself on any burning pile if it would put this young and blessed soul in the way of happiness.

"You *are* right," he said, "you're always right. All those things *were* said, and many others. What are called

sensible things, the things that loosen one's teeth. But now that they've made me drop into an ego air pocket, let's take a serious advantage of it and turn the whole thing over."

"By the whole thing do you mean our marriage. . . ."

"Yes, and the fact that I'm a Jew."

"All right," she said. "Turn away, if you must."

She left him, dropped into a large armchair, crossed one charming leg over the other, sank her chin, and put the tips of her fingers together. She tried to look old and wise and legal. They don't go together very often.

She succeeded in making him go on his knees and put his head in her lap.

"That's all from you," she said, touching his sleek black hair with a sudden but not unusual desire. "Please never let me hear one word of it again. You are Max and I am Jean. What our other names are, where we came from, who and what our people happen to be, doesn't matter. So far as we're concerned the world began when we met and it will end when we part, which will only be in death. In addition to the possession of each other on a ninety-nine years' lease you have your music, and I have the responsibility of keeping you well for your music, and if all that isn't enough for two, think it over carefully and let me know."

She recited this creed with a mixture of lightness and gravity, hovering for once, as he did so often, between laughter and tears.

And when Denham came in with the breakfast tray, having added marmalade, Jean was frightfully interested in the blurb on the wrapper of a novel and Max lost in admiration of the clear delightful lines of a Goya print.

"Oh, thank you, Denham," she said.

"Thank you, Miss Jean," said Denham.

A moment later, with her heart in her mouth by the same process, she stood in a matronly attitude with a coffee pot in one hand and a milk jug in the other.

Max celebrated the burial of the inferiority complex and fear with a burst of Mendelssohn.

III

That evening Max dined with the two Farquhars and made the tragic discovery that death and burial cause only an individual stopping of impressions through the senses, of the pulling of the chords of motion, of the ways of thought and of service to the flesh.

Tony Northrup was one of the guests, at Jean's request—she hadn't seen or heard from him since her return—and the others were ex-Ambassador and Mrs. Russell D. Drayton, Judge and Mrs. Churchill Victor Spencer, and Mr. and Mrs. George Parker Hinchcliffe, who, with rather startling naïveté, added 3rd to their name, like an order. Max wondered what would be thought of his brother pianist, Valito de Volis, if he were to put 103rd on the cards that he dropped on his friends in Paris.

Helen was in her mischievous mood. Heaven help the person who held out his leg to be pulled. From the instant that she left the dressing table, having put a last delicious touch behind her ears of the Matchabelli scent, she was on the *qui vive* for anything that could be turned to ridicule and reduced to absurdity. Her wits, like fire-

works, only needed a spark. It was a mood that put many men on their metal and most women into sulks. One, too, which made those people very angry who resented sarcasm at the expense of their city, or country, and lived in the fatuous belief that both had been especially chosen by God for personal residence.

The fact that she wore the quills of a porcupine in regard to Jean and her engagement was due to some extent to the amazing scene in which she had been the chief figure that afternoon. In describing it to Farquhar before she had dressed for dinner, she had made him laugh before he had blazed with anger.

"When Jean had gone off to Max and you had disappeared I was almost ready to go out when a message was brought up to my room. Without asking for permission and making an appointment, which, I regret to say, I should have refused, it appeared that I was being waited upon by a special Committee of the Society for the Preservation of Pure American Blood—the S.P.P.A.B.—six ladies, I was informed. Having surmounted my astonishment, and the threat of apoplexy, I altered my mind on the top of the steps and went back into the house. The six ladies had ranged themselves in the drawing-room as though they were about to be judged—though not at a beauty show. Hard-bosomed women all of them, with glasses pinching the tops of their noses into small aggressive lumps. They scrambled to their feet when I went in—a queer assortment of legs—and the one whose pure American blood had been pickled as well as preserved stood out and delivered an address. Although I had failed to pay any attention to the papers of enrollment, sent regularly once a year, I was told that I had qualified

for membership to the Society in every one of its requirements. It was therefore not to be understood how I could bring myself to give my consent, if, indeed I had done so, to the marriage of my daughter of P.A.B to the son of a German Jew. All six women spoke, though none for more than five minutes. The chairwoman of the Committee, sat, watch in hand, and timed them with a bell. The same things were said by each in almost exactly similar words. And at the end of every address there was long-drawn-out applause. Never so much amused in my life, or anything like so outraged, I bore with all this in complete and enigmatical silence with my back to the light. When, finally, I was called upon to make a statement to this Committee, I merely said that, with or without their permission, I was then going out to establish a Society for the Preservation of the American Home against the entrance of Interference. With which I left them sitting bolt upright like a row of winded owls."

As Farquhar watched Helen introduce Max to her guests and saw the instant stiffening of their spines behind a façade of extreme politeness he wondered whether the evening would end with sudden dramatic abruptness, or wind an uncomfortable way to an early and orderly departure. Everything hung on the thin thread of her mood, he knew. If Max, who looked as out of place between the white-haired Mrs. Drayton and the unpowdered Mrs. Spencer as an Italian primitive between two Royal Academy portraits, once telegraphed his distress to Helen at the end of the table, look out for a cyclonic disturbance and low visibility.

Helen, like Mr. Lorbenstein, had become a convert. She would fight for her new faith with flaming sword,

These two thoroughbred and impeccable ladies, of whose mothers and grandmothers Mrs. Wharton has written, made a very pleasant hour for Max. They considered that the Farquhar-Lorbenstein union was quite as disastrous as an earthquake, but they permitted no suggestion of that opinion to leak through at their hostess's table. In a corner of the drawing-room after dinner, pretending to be absorbed in the study of tapestry, they exchanged whispered notes and quick impressions, while Helen and Jean listened to one of Mrs. Hinchcliffe's nursery stories which she never omitted to tell.

"He's a highly civilized person, of course—in fact foreign. Talks almost too well, perhaps, for a party like this."

"Do you know, I think so too. Suspiciously artistic, it seemed to me. But then he is a pianist, after all, according to the papers. I've never heard him play."

"Good looking. Handsome, in fact, in an Oriental way. Indeed, though I hate to use such a word in regard to a man, really rather beautiful at times."

"I think so. Dangerous. There was a man at Lucerne last year, who did conjuring tricks at the Palace Hotel . . ."

"And one at Aix-les-Bains, a professional dancer—I wouldn't let Mary go near him and how angry she was, to be sure . . ."

"And there was a gondolier who would have taken us out every day the year we were at Venice, if I hadn't thought it wise to engage a man with a beard . . ."

"But as a husband for the daughter of Helen Farquhar—oh, my dear, what *are* we coming to?"

"I know. It's too appalling. Think of the children, if it lasts as long as that!"

"And what *are* we going to do? It makes everything so terribly embarrassing. Already New York has become such an amazing mixture . . ."

Max had found that they loved and understood something of music and were always at Carnegie Hall, and so he insisted on playing two or three of their favourites, which moved them to a rare and uncomfortable emotion.

Spencer, who had labelled him a Jew-boy, was carried off his feet. He held his breath and grew red in the face, and, as soon as he was able, cried out, "Never heard anything like it. Never knew the piano would do it. My God, Farquhar, it's a sensation." But on his way home and in coolness, he said to his wife, "Think of Mary or Laura as Mrs. Lorbenstein! We should have to get out of America and spend the rest of our lives in Ouchy, halfway up to Lausanne."

"What on earth's happened to Helen, Churchill? She must have been hypnotized. If Jean was not in the mood for a nice American boy—I'm dreadfully sorry for young Northrup—at least she might have hedged a little by taking a Frenchman of title or an English younger son. All that money could easily have caught an Earl. They're going about in heaps. The whole thing is very disgraceful. The Farquhars too! It sets such a bad example. What *are* we going to do?"

"He won't get into any of the clubs. That's one thing. I know that, all right."

"Yes, at present the clubs are safe. Let's thank God for that." And they did so, in the car.

The clubs, the clubs! The last lingering line of defence.

Tony Northrup, who had sat next to Jean at dinner, had hardly spoken a word. While Jean had chatted away about Paris and London, the two crossings, the house in the Avenue de Bois de Boulogne, her plans and his, finding him completely hidden behind an artificial screen, he had gazed at Max with something of the reluctant admiration and astonishment which would swamp an Esquimo at the sight of Honolulu. He had made up his mind to fight to the last ditch for Jean, but when he measured himself against the man who had supplanted him, he threw up his hands and said "Shoot." He recognized in Max the sort of man who was inevitably called a sheik by every feminine creature, and who, never mind if he had graduated to Hollywood from the shoe-cleaning place in the Biltmore or an Italian restaurant, would have been the daily recipient of thousands of illiterate letters of the most disconcerting kind.

Then, too, he had found an utterly different Jean. He had said to himself, in his limited number of words, that she was like a girl who had hovered between life and death after a frightful accident. She had come out of the hospital quiet and responsible, even, perhaps—though it seemed absurd—religious. She had made up a mind which, as he had known it, had been in a state of flux, on all the serious things. She had used the extraordinary word "duty" once or twice, which he had never heard from a girl. It would have raised a howl of derision. And with the cheerfulness of a woman with children she had talked domestically. It had taken his breath away. An honest, simple, forthright fellow he had been bound to acknowledge that this Jean, the new Jean, had grown into precisely

what he had banked on her becoming after two or three years of marriage.

She had said to him, for instance, when he had fathered the hope that she would have a good time in Paris, "I shall have the best of good times, Tony, thank you. As soon as we get back I shall have the house to put in order. Think of the fun of arranging a mass of lovely things in nearly all the rooms. It's in a frightful mess at present." She might have inherited her father's sense of beauty and composition, but, in the old days—only a few months old!—her idea of a good time would have been to rush from dance to dance and to go on a continual joy-ride.

She had said too, "Oh Lord no! I shall have no use for Society. I'm one of the workers now. I have a job, old boy. I'm the guardian of a genius." And in her laughter at this grandiloquence there was the ring of pride.

As soon as the ladies had left the room, Max had gone round to talk to Tony. He knew that this was the boy to whom Jean had been engaged and was extremely sympathetic, though, of course, he said nothing about it. He had felt that he had been put through a searching examination from the other side of the table—awkward moments, those—and had been eager to make himself as friendly as he had been able. He had said to himself that the boy was a splendid type, with his small head and clean jaw, magnificent shoulders and deep chest. He had envied him his height and strength, good nerves and sportsmanship. It had required a good deal of the latter, he thought, to bring him that night to the house.

Max had done most of the talking. Under any circumstances he must have done so, because Tony was monosyl-

labic, though he had done his best to be pleasant and cordial. But Max, whose antennæ were as delicate as those of a bee, was reminded of a journey that he had made from Paris to Aix-les-Bains with an Englishman in his sleeper. Having said, "Good evening. Rotten weather," this person had considerately finished his pipe in the corridor and turned into the lower berth as soon as the train was swaying on its way. Called at five o'clock the following morning he had said, "How are you. Looks better today," had done up his bag and smoked in the corridor until the train had stopped, by the grace of God, at Aix. They had stayed at the Hotel de l'Europe for a fortnight and passed each other often, but the Englishman had done nothing more than nod and wrinkle his eyes whenever he had been unable to avoid the act of recognition.

When, finally, Farquhar had led the way to the drawing-room, Max could have counted Tony's words on the fingers of both his hands, quite conscious of having been regarded as a freak. Not only that. He felt, as he had never been made to feel before, that he was a Jew. At the end of the evening, when he stayed to say "good night" to Jean after everybody had left he was a depressed and jaded man. His usually light heart had sunk like lead to his boots and his natural ebullience of spirit was as flat as a pricked balloon. Even his playing had only been able, momentarily, he felt, to sweep away the politely disguised prejudice and antagonism of Helen Farquhar's guests. He longed for the friendship of Paris. The warm and uncritical acceptance of cosmopolitanism.

"Oh, my God," he said to himself, "what am I doing to Jean?"

IV

It was not late, as New York went, except in its few old-fashioned houses, and so when Max bowed to Helen, with a murmur of thanks, she said, "Oh no, not yet. Let's go into the morning room, be comfortable and smoke. The only fun about these highly respectable dinner parties is to pick the people to pieces as soon as they've cleared out."

Jean took his arm. "Yes, come on. I haven't had a word with you yet." She suspected that he had been hurt.

And Farquhar added, "Do, by all means. I should like to hear your impressions of a dinner at which one is permitted to eat, a rare performance now. You'll find when you've been in New York a bit longer that dinner at home has gone out. People ask you to dine at clubs and restaurants and having got you make you dance. I call it a confounded fraud, a wretched imposition. No one dreams of being punctual, you hang about drinking cocktails of doubtful antecedents, and when at last you arrive at the table you must either prance about with rather heavy women or sit in seething loneliness with iced water in your glass and bottles under your feet. Dinner? Every now and then waiters shoot tired things at you to the never ceasing jazz, and after you've endured barbarity as long as you can stick it you sneak away, drive to the club and order something to eat."

He opened the door for Helen.

"The point that you've forgotten," she said laughing, "is that men don't talk any longer and women like to be held. Wise people dine before going to dinner and then

commence to drink. Cocktails prevent the others from remembering whether they eat or not. One must move with the times."

With a glance at Jean over her shoulder she took Farquhar's arm. They crossed the gallery together, and having arrived in the morning-room she presented him with his pipe.

"I know that you've been spoiling for that the whole of the evening," she said.

"No, no, I'd forgotten it. I've been watching you."

"*Watching* me! . . . I thought one watched a bowl of gold fish or a beehive or a moving picture. If you say 'that's what I mean' I'll hit you."

He said, "It isn't what I mean. Why not say something about a Mediterranean sunrise, swallows round an English house, or an aeroplane looping the loop? But I'd rather be hit than ignored."

"You funny old thing," she said, buzzing over his pouch.

As a matter of fact she remembered that she had been watching him. He had looked what Jean was in the habit of calling a distinguished person rather "noble" that night. Like all men of his dwindling type he wore a tail coat. His thick white hair was all the more becoming against the deep tan of his skin. There was strength in his wide shoulders and the story of hard exercise and a moderate diet in his athletic concavity. She had noticed with a certain sympathy that he had been happy and in his element with men of his own caste and kidney, who could talk shooting and fishing and horses with his own enthusiasm. Especially with Russell Drayton, who had been at

the Court of St. James's for a term and afterwards in Italy, it was easy to see that he was on common and well understood ground. They knew the same people and places, trout streams and race courses, golf clubs and Baccarat rooms. They spoke the same language, belonged to the same period, went to the same tailor, smoked the same tobacco, and had come to the conclusion, at long last, that Van den Hum was the best of all liqueurs. Then, too, the ex-Ambassador, who still spent most of his time in a land where vineyards provided wine, was an ardent collector of prints. She had seen her home-coming husband animated and high spirited for the first time and heard his infectious chuckle. He had forgotten the inevitably depressing fifty-five feeling among old friends.

Jean held Max up at the door.

"Anything wrong?" she asked.

"Oh, good heavens, no!"

He overdid his denial. If he had said, "No, but I'm tired," or "I've been frightfully bored," she would have been in complete agreement and let him off. How different the evening had been from that exciting affair at the Serté Studio when those exotic and brilliant people had screamed across the table, thrown epigrams at each other in handfuls like confetti, and afterwards done things in the middle of the studio on the spur of inspired moments. That was the atmosphere in which Max thrived and opened up. In Park Avenue among the old New Yorkers he was like an orchid stuck into a Staffordshire pot.

So she said, "Tell me. I've got to know, old boy."

But what was there that he could tell? Everyone of

her mother's friends, and young Northrup, without the slightest intention, had left him with an indefinable sense of having come in by mistake. How could he explain that, on top of their talk before coffee—without laying himself open to a charge of morbidity? Besides, those people were her friends and Tony was the boy with whom she had been brought up.

So he pulled himself together. "No," he said, laughing. "There's nothing. Nothing at all. I've had a charming evening. The only thing I can say is that perhaps the effect of playing the little gentleman has left me rather flat." He put her hand to his lips. "I'm a Bohemian."

"And therefore I shall be the first lady of that land." Greatly relieved she opened the door and went in.

She had been afraid that Tony might have been short. He had looked at her several times that evening with his honest heart in his eyes. Poor dear old Tony—she had let him down very badly and he hadn't got over it. But wasn't it better to have done so before than after marriage and have caused a frightful smash? Think of mother and father and the present state of things. To her way of thinking Max and she must have met and loved and gone together. He was her job, you see. He was the man who made all her vibrations answer. She demanded him.

Under the pride and possession of Jean and the friendship and confidence of the Farquhars Max recovered his feet. He enjoyed an hour with them in their favourite room, which might have been in his beloved Paris. He felt on equal terms again and blossomed. He forgot his sister's warning and the truth of it that night. He wasn't marked this or that by these kind people, divided off with a great mass of God's children into a second class pen.

He was simply Max. They liked, trusted, and respected him. He was one of themselves. And as for Jean her love was like a beacon. It made him catch his breath.

And so he went to his father's house, walking two inches above the earth, with the scent of Jean on his lips and the warm grips of Helen and Farquhar gratefully on his hand. It was his intention to shut himself up in the music room, far from his father's quarters, and send out his passion and joy on the wings of music.

A blinking and cheerful Denham let him in.

"A note for you, sir," he said, " 'anded in by a chauffeur about 'arf an hour ago."

"Thanks very much," said Max putting it in his pocket and making for the stairs. He was spoiling to get to the piano. Massenet or Debussy?

"Beg pardon, sir," said Denham, hauling in a yawn. "There's 'urgent' on the envelope."

"Oh, is there?" said Max. "Thanks again. Good night."

Once in the music room he fumbled his way to the piano and sat there in the dark. Note, note? The only note that he cared about was the one he struck. Urgent? What could be more urgent than his uncontrollable desire to play his love of Jean? And on and on he played it, inspired, uplifted, transfigured, while Jean slept, and the city slept, and night drew back at the firm approach of day.

Then he rose, giddy and trembling, like a man who had spent his force. . . . There was something about a note. . . . During the last hour this word had forced itself into his consciousness as the shadow of a bat zigzags over a moonlit lawn. It had gradually altered his mood,

his key, his rhythm. It had sent him into the minor, into melancholy, and back into—Oh God, was it fear?

It was in his pocket. He took it out. He went to the window. Should he open it or not? A thick blue envelope with large backward handwriting. Why urgent? What was there urgent in his life except this marriage to Jean? He stood in the slowly growing light and the thing was a menace in his hand. Then, at last, he ripped it open.

This was written, without address or name.

"You can, of course, marry Miss Farquhar. She is under the glamour of your music. But if you do you will commit a cruel and selfish act. I go so far as to say that it will be an act of sacrilege—certainly vandalism. She will inevitably wake up before long and return to her own kind. Draw back, Mr. Lorbenstein, and let this bewitched girl off."

PART X

I

If there were no Alys D'Arcy Bagshot, it would be necessary to invent her.

The writer of the letter to Max, marked urgent, was a first cousin of Helen Farquhar, married to the well-known polo watcher Harry Bell Bagshot, who, as the son of a rich man, had always belonged to the easily recognizable group of professional do-nothings.

She was a woman who had never made the slightest effort to live down her two deplorable handicaps. The first was the affected spelling of her christian name, which had soaked into her nature, and the second the prohibition of her mother against the touch of the sun on her skin. The latter impediment had put her among those irritating creatures who close shutters and haul down blinds at the first sign of summer, never venture into the open without gloves and parasols, and wear green veils miraculously suspended from the tips of their noses. What to everybody else was Heaven-sent weather, good for health and crops, to her was dreadfully sunny with the most frightful glare.

Without passion and without children, and therefore with a dog, she simulated an aggressive feminism and

helplessness and demanded perpetual attention. As hardy as a mountain guide, with the digestion of a seagull, she invented a series of ailments which called for constant rest. She was obliged to put up her feet at the most inconvenient moments and claimed the whole sofa as soon as she entered a house. She was, too, a specialist on the subject of draughts, so that her wretched husband, a frazzled companion of the poor relative type, or the maid without whom she was lost, was bound to hover about her with a shawl or a wrap. She posed as an intellectual, but it tried her eyes to read, and so she gathered a working impression of current books from the weekly reviews. With far too good a memory ever to possess an original thought, her conversation, on which she prided herself, resembled a kedgeree.

About the average height she was rather proudly thin —regarding fatness as the mark of the plebeian. This enabled her to wear her clothes with neatness and distinction. She was an expert in clothes and a terror to her dressmaker. She had the pale flesh that always goes with red hair, of which she had too much. She belonged to the dropping hair pin period, which held that a woman's hair was her crowning glory. It dominated her life and drove away her maids. Her eyebrows and eyes were red and her nose was Roman, but as her chin receded she bore an embarrassing resemblance to an exotic bird. One sees it alive in Parks and stuffed in certain museums. She was pre-Raphaelite in the Burne-Jonesian manner—the veteran Virgin manner, undoubtedly well-bred. She never desecrated her face with powder or lip-stick and achieved a perpetual unshininess by never moving about. If there were no Alys D'Arcy Bagshot it would be necessary to

invent her as an example, a warning and an expletive, according to whether she were a relation, an acquaintance or an employer.

The afternoon after the evening during which she had sent the note to Max she called at the Farquhar's house. She had just returned from France to spend six months at Southampton, and having been in Paris all the winter had heard him play at several recitals, and had frequently seen him adored. As a relative of the Farquhars and a hard and fast adherent of P. A. B. she felt compelled to exert herself at the risk of getting a shine.

Helen had gone out in quest of the beginning of a trousseau for Jean, but Jean was at home, waiting for a call from Denham. It belonged to the daily routine. The Bagshot dog, giving deep thanks for a brief respite, went to sleep in the Isotta-Franchini which lolled against the kerb.

Jean said "Damn" when the name was announced. Any day she would rather see three crows flying against a rainy sky than this thin bundle of fads. She found Mrs. Harry Bell Bagshot on the sofa, on which her feet were up. She wore clothes that were in all the shades of autumnal bracken and as carefully cut as a hedge.

She said, with an English accent in which the "a's" were Scotch, "My dear, I came to talk to your Mother, but you will have to do."

"Yes, but do you think I will?" asked Jean, with equal gravity, taking a pale left hand.

"No, honestly, I do not—although she's apparently just as unbalanced as you are, from what everybody says."

Jean laughed. She liked this plain, bold, frankness. It reminded her of her own. "Unbalanced? How?"

"There you are, you see. You don't understand that by getting involved with this brilliant but impossible young man you might as well hang yourself so far as Society is concerned."

Jean shot a look at the clock. At any moment the call might come from Denham.

"Yes, but what if I've decided to hang Society?"

"You can't. You simply can't. As the daughter of Helen and Erskine Farquhar, and the greatest heiress in this country—I might almost say alive—you are dedicated to Society. It has the right to you. Surely you must have seen that?"

Once more this old and dreary subject! It recurred like a decimal point.

"Yes," said Jean, with all the patience that she could manage, "I did see it in the old days in a sort of way. But even before I had met the impossible young man I was singing the 'Red Flag.'"

"By which you mean that you were ready to flirt with those ridiculous people the Moseleys and all the rest of that Lido-Chelsea-Greenwich Village gang?"

"No, because that would have meant my going from one absurdity to another, and being fed up with the one I knew I had cut myself adrift. The Red Flag stands for rebellion."

Mrs. Bagshot fluttered her hands. "Do you ask me to believe that you call Society absurd?" The petulant voice rose like a lift from floor to floor.

Jean was perfectly calm, and rather enjoying herself. "Not only absurd, but witless, pathetic and vindictive—at any rate in New York. There may be something a little genuine in that of Boston, Baltimore and Philadel-

phia but the heterogeneous mass that's called Society here is a sham and is absolutely grotesque."

Mrs. Bagshot shuddered and closed her eyes as though some inconsiderate person had slammed a door. She was far too delicately strung to be able to endure loud reports.

"It would be naïve to maintain the belief that New York Society is what it was before the War. I have to grant you that. But I cannot allow you to sweep what certainly remains of its old exclusiveness into the general heap. The body that is led by your mother is representative of the best in the country."

"Some of the best, of course. But the only passwords the others need are money and wine. With these and a good Press agent, anybody can get in. There isn't a door in New York that can resist a golden key."

"My dear," said Mrs. Bagshot severely, "that's tub-thumping. That's the sort of thing that Labour leaders earn a good deal of money for saying. You can't in any way justify your behaviour by hiding behind such rubbish. Your mother leads an established and recognized Society of which I, like yourself, am an inherited member, and you're bound to stick to us. If Mr. Lorbenstein is so badly in your blood that you must let yourself go, all I can say with regret, is do so, but for God's sake remember your caste. We don't *marry* such men, you know."

"Isn't that, perhaps," said Jean, laughing, "because they never ask you to?" She saw, with surprise, that it was half past four. Max must have over-slept.

Mrs. Bagshot put her feet on the floor. She was hot. In fact she felt that her face was shiny. It was intensely vexing. But she was fighting for a cause.

"My dear Jean," she said, ignoring the question,

"hitherto you've seemed to me to possess a sense of humour. What has happened to you since I saw you last? I didn't see you in Paris. I was at Cannes at the time. Can't you throw your mind into the future and see even the outline of the ridiculous figure that you will cut in the world? Can't you imagine the quite disgusting things that people will say about you for marrying a man like this? It will generally be hinted that you *had* to marry him. People will not be able to find any other excuse. It will be, 'Oh yes, of course. A musician who had every woman in Paris lying at his feet. Naturally she was crazy about him. But, good Heavens, there is another and a more proper way of dealing with a susceptible indiscretion than the wedding ring.' If you were the daughter of a worthy little man in the suburbs or of a vulgar *nouveau riche,* or almost anybody except precisely who you are, you could leave Church on the arm of a Jew, a Jap, a Parsee or an Indian if you felt that you must. But again and again I must remind you that as a Farquhar you cannot do as you like. However greatly you may scorn it from your Communistic viewpoint, Society claims you, and as one of us you must subject yourself to its laws. You may say that a certain number of Lorbenstein's people *have* managed to slip into Society. That's true, but only its outer and careless edge. I'm sorry to say that there are those among us who sell themselves, and others who allow curiosity and a love of mischief to take them to Jewish parties. They are done very well, meet an amusing mixture and don't know who's their host and who's the Maitre d'Hotel. You see dozens of titles and well-known names at Jewish entertainments in the Paris edition of the *Herald* and *Daily Mail,* in the

notes of Biarritz and the Lido, Le Touquet and Aix-les-Bains, *but* do you ever see in any paper the names of these people as being entertained by their guests? Only when they're hard up and get a substantial graft. Apart from all this, however, I advise you, for the sake of your happiness and dignity, to wriggle out of this nasty affair. Artists, whether Jewish or not, are never one-woman men. Rectitude, loyalty, responsibility, faithfulness—they know nothing about such things. Women hurl themselves at their heads, and being artists they succumb. History tells you that—to say nothing of the daily scandals that you find in every paper. It is perfectly safe to say that you will be put to a series of ignominies and horrors that will lead from disillusion and heartbreak to divorce and the fatted calf. Back to the parental roof, my dear, labelled damaged goods."

Jean said "Have you got a watch? I think this clock must have stopped."

"What!" cried Mrs. Bagshot, "haven't you been listening . . . have I been wasting my breath?"

"I'm afraid so," said Jean. "I'm awfully sorry, but I was thinking of something else." Which was perfectly true. Was Max still asleep? He must have been frightfully tired.

"Well!" It was a rather fine feat on this woman's part that she had sufficient breath to say that.

"Please forgive me. And, for another thing, you see, I've heard it all before. I've had thousands of letters a day in which all that you've just said has been written at length. Societies, Leagues, Institutions, Clubs, and all the other strange groups that have been formed to push back the hands of the clock to the days of persecution,

witch burning, and religious wars, have petitioned me every morning. Every one of my school friends has abused me over the 'phone, and I've even been held up in shops by anti-Jewish women. They ought to be sent to Geneva. Must you be running away?"

Mrs. Bagshot had not merely got up. She had risen to her feet. And there she now stood, in the middle of that beautiful room, thin, immaculate, despotic, but the abject slave to a sham. For all her red hair, and red and brown shades, her pale unpainted skin and drooping lily pose, she was a cruel and mediæval creature, ready, at any moment, to fan the flames of a discriminate slaughter with genuine old style carnage, while she sent out orders from the G.H.Q. in the most exclusive Club.

She said, flicking her long red lashes, "Then this thing is going through?"

"Without a doubt," said Jean.

"And this man is to call himself Lorbenstein-Farquhar so that he may trespass on the Christian side of the lines?"

"Yes, but simply in order to please Father who wants the name to go on. Max can walk wherever he likes and be adored wherever he goes. If he chooses to live on a desert island I shall be there to adore, and when I think back to this conversation I'll form a society of monkeys and teach them intolerance. There are sure to be squirrels to hate."

As soon as this brackenish lady had taken herself off, with her very Roman nose, Jean rushed to the telephone.

The answer she got from Denham was, "Mr. Max is

not in his room, Miss. The piano was open this morning, but there wasn't anything like the usual number of cigarette ends, and the bed 'as not been touched, from which I presoom that Mr. Max must 'ave gone out in the early hours of the morning. Funny he 'aint come back. 'E's still in evening clothes."

II

Having come to the conclusion that it was extremely exhausting to drive in New York, with its one-way streets and constant staticisms, Helen had walked to the shops. The afternoon had been dull. Clouds of carbon-monoxide had hung poisonously in the motionless air, and the staccato noises of the city, not perhaps so hysterical as those of Paris, where every driver is in terror of every other, and so adds to the chorus of hooting, had worn her out. The increasing peril of the streets, too, which made it necessary continually to be strung up to a high pitch of self-preservation, to say nothing of the crisscross tides of people who blurred the eyes like a motion picture seen too close and run too fast, had made her long for the safety and quietude of the house.

As she walked wearily along Park Avenue, between the Gulliveresque apartment houses that afforded the smallest amount of elbow room to their Lilliputian occupants, she wondered how much longer it would be possible to live in New York in a normal condition of mind. She added "Or in any other city. There's not much to choose between them." She was getting closer and closer to the mood, she began to find, for disentanglement, for a garden

such as Gamlingay loved, for time and peace in which to read, for some private corner of the earth to which people only came when they were invited and sent a chart, for the companionship of trees.

She found Jean standing on the threshold of the telephone room in an attitude of worry. She said, quickly, "Is anything the matter, darling?"

"I don't quite know, Mumsie," said Jean, continuing to think.

Whenever Helen was anxious or frightened, which had rarely happened until Jean had waved the Red Flag —and very often since—she immediately assumed an air of tremendous confidence. She seemed to say, "Everything's been done before and most things can be mended." She put her arm round Jean's shoulder and led her into the morning room.

Farquhar was standing on the rug in front of the fireplace, with a pipe between his teeth. He had just returned from playing Squash and felt that he had done his duty for the day. The one good deed.

"Oh, this is jolly," he said. "I had expected to be alone with the tea tray. I'm in luck."

He was becoming—wonder of wonders—a domesticated man. Very much more resilient too, and easy of approach. He had sat, so to speak, on the League of Nations and looked sympathetically over other people's walls. He felt that he had broadened.

"Yes, it *is* very jolly," said Helen, and added with a touch of her old mischief, "It's more exciting to find one's husband at home in the afternoon than anybody else's." She sat on a sofa with Jean. No one would have thought that she was tired.

And Jean, after "Hullo, father," went unsteadily on with her thoughts. There was a deepening line between her eyes.

Farquhar's wireless message "Is anything the matter?" was answered by Helen with, "Obviously, but I don't know what it is."

But they were almost immediately saved from the effort of diplomacy by Jean, who gave out what was on her mind in her usual candid way. Having repeated Denham's message she said, "What do you make of it?"

It was extremely strange to Helen. She was perfectly certain that Max was not the sort of man who would go about willingly in evening clothes in the day time. But with the desire to give it the best complexion she said, "Oh, he's probably wool-gathering. Geniuses do, you know."

"And you, father?"

"Um," said Farquhar. "It's five o'clock, I see. . . . It seems to me that if he had been called to meet friends at one of those ghastly late parties—which I suppose was the case—and he had been given a bed, he might easily have got you on the telephone by now. He knows that you make a point of being at his house by four. But, of course, there's the possibility that he may have overslept. I can't understand how the devil he does it, but the day's his time for sleep. I vote we don't begin to feel uneasy for an hour or two. Here's tea."

Here it was, duly escorted by two soft footmen. A European tea, *complet*. Most enticing.

One of the men spoke while the other placed the tray.

"A Mr. Denham has just called, Madam. . . ."

Jean was on her feet.

"Denham!"

She turned wide-eyed to her mother.

"Show him in," said Helen.

"Very good, madam."

"That's odd," said Farquhar.

Jean had lost her colour. She stood with her hands gripped together.

Helen marked time while the other man remained. She said, "It was quite appalling out. The crowds, the traffic, the chunks of dirt in one's eyes! I walked to avoid the irritation of being held up in spasms. I'll never do it again."

"The only time for walking is at eight o'clock in the morning," said Farquhar, returning her ball, "before the subways have belched."

"I wouldn't leave bed at that unholy time unless an earthquake tossed me out. I would rather go for ten minutes drive and sit in the car for two hours."

One footman retired as the other returned.

"Mr. Denham," he said.

Wearing one of Mr. Lorbenstein's jackets that was a little too small, with his livery trousers and regulation collar, Denham resembled one of the numerous persons who were encountered by Farquhar in Park Avenue before breakfast, taking the dog for a run. From force of habit he drew up as the door was closed and stood stiffly at attention.

"What is it, Denham?" asked Jean.

"Beg pardon, miss, but seeing as 'ow Mr. Max 'as not come back, nor yet got on the 'phone, I took the liberty of walkin' round for orders. I thought you'd wish

to prime me with somethin' to tell Mr. Lorbenstein. He'll be sure to throw a fit."

"Very thoughtful," said Farquhar. "Thanks."

"What do you think has happened?" asked Jean.

"Couldn't say, I'm sure, miss. But, knowing as 'ow things is, I'm just a bit disturbed."

"Knowing what?" asked Helen. "What do you mean by 'how things are'?"

Denham cleared his throat. He felt that he was back in his Sergeant's uniform, standing in the orderly room before the Colonel Commanding, the Adjutant and the Quartermaster.

"The sentiment for and against, madam, and the like of that. It's not only upstairs but down, in every house and in all the Clubs, I'm told by friends of mine. Personally, I'm in the middle of the road as the saying is. . . ."

"Yes," said Farquhar, in the Colonel manner, "but tell us what you know."

"Well, sir, what I know is this. When Mr. Max come in last night from dining here he was very eager to get to his piano. Almost before I could take 'is 'at and coat he was making for the stairs. There was music in 'is eyes. Just before I opened the door for 'im, sir, a chauffeur left a note in a blue envelope, back-'anded writing, marked 'Urgent' . . ."

"Oh? That's the first we've heard about that."

"Did you know the chauffeur?" asked Jean.

"No, miss, I did not. A smart feller; sleepy, didn't say who he was from. Foreign, by the looks of him. Had a hairy moustache. He just 'anded the note and went."

"Did you give Mr. Max the note?"

"Yes, miss, down in the 'all. 'For you, sir,' I sez. 'For me?' sez 'e, putting it in his pocket. 'Yes, sir,' I sez. 'Marked urgent.' At which 'e nipped upstairs to the music room."

"Do you think he read it at once?"

"No, miss. I can swear 'e didn't. You see, as the 'ouse had gorn to bed and Mr. Max was in, I turned off in the 'all and went up there and then. The music room door was shut, so I opened it to ask Mr. Max in the usual way if 'e'd 'ave anything, and he was playing in the dark. He couldn't 'ave turned up the lights, read the note and turned 'em out in that time, so I knew as 'ow 'e 'ad forgot about it, as I thought he would."

"Marked urgent and sent by car so late. . . . Very extraordinary," said Jean.

"Um, I see," said Farquhar. "Do you believe that the note had the effect of taking him out later on?"

"That I can't say, sir. Same as I often do I sat for some time outside the door drinking in the music—My Lord, Mr. Max can play!—beggin' your pardon, sir—and when I went up, feeling elated, which is the effect it 'as, I slept in one long piece. As I told Miss Jean over the telephone, I don't think Mr. Max sat at the piano his usual time because the maid 'as did the room noticed that he had smoked fewer cigarettes. As a rule the ash-tray's full."

Jean commenced to walk about, strangely devoid of words. It wasn't necessary to express anxiety. It was stamped upon her face.

"Late this afternoon," said Helen, "you discovered that he had not been to bed?"

"I did, madam—when I went to call 'im to get ready for Miss Jean. About quarter past four, that was. It's the routine. There was no evening clothes about neither. So, you see, 'e 'adn't changed. But 'is coat and 'at was in the coat lobby, which was queer."

"Mumsie," said Jean. "We may be wasting time. Max may be home by now. I'll dash down to the telephone and come straight back."

Helen nodded, with almost the same confidence in her smile. But as soon as Jean was out of the room she turned to Denham.

"You have a theory that you've been holding back."

"Quite right, madam, I have. I 'esitated to bring it out before the young lady."

"Thank you, Denham. What is it? Quickly now."

He looked from Helen to Farquhar with screwed-up eyes. "In two words then—foul play."

They were words that were echoed incredulously.

Denham took a step forward and loosened his collar a little. He was a kind, thoughtful and sympathetic man and he had been much moved and impressed by what he called "love's young dream" in the servants' parlour during the numerous heated arguments among his fellow servants. He had all the sentimentality of the British lower class. In addition to this his favourite forms of literature were detective and mystery stories, and he was an ardent movie fan. He was steeped in sensationalism. He lowered his voice.

"My theory is that Mr. Max was seized and carried off last night and possibly strung up by the Klu Klux Klan."

"Good God," cried Farquhar, "why?"

"Anti-Jew business, sir. As I 'inted a moment ago there's a lot of feeling about this marriage."

"That's perfectly true," said Helen. "We know that only too well."

"But it's died away a great deal since the papers have dropped the thing," said Farquhar.

"Don't you believe it, sir. It's more than ever discussed and fought over. I've seen people use their fists. And only yesterday afternoon when I took tea into Mrs. Otto Saab, the old gentleman's youngest daughter who 'ad some friends at the 'ouse, there was very angry things said about disloyalty to the race. If it isn't the Klu Klux Klan then it's the Jews themselves as did it."

"Did what?"

"Enticed 'im away when nobody was about. Both sides want to stop this marriage, sir, make no mistake about that. I'm in a position to know."

The man was greatly in earnest.

Farquhar was all the more annoyed and impatient because his friends had continued to argue. He loathed their interference. Having made up his mind to accept and encourage the position that was enough.

"What rot the whole thing is," he said. "Why can't they leave it to us? It's our funeral, not theirs."

"I beg your pardon, sir, no. It's bigger than that. The way I look at it is this. It's the superiority of the Christians against the inferiority of the Jews. One lot is hot under the collar because they think they'll give the people they 'ate and fear a big leg up. The other is angry and bitter because Mr. Max is owning defeat by tagging your name on to his. It's Biblical, that's what it is. The old row over again."

Helen remembered the deputation of the S.P.P.A.B., the letters from all over the country, her own original horror. Denham was right about the wide-spread feeling, as the recent amazing publicity in the newspapers had proved. . . . Was it possible that after she, Farquhar and Mr. Lorbenstein had become humane this affair was to be turned into tragedy by the inhumanity of outsiders?

Before anything else could be said Jean came back. There was fear in her eyes.

"No news," she said, and hovered about the room.

Farquhar knew Denham and his kind. He had employed them in England and commanded them in France. They were the men who sang songs about bed-ridden mothers and little old homes in the west, who saw ghosts in the trenches, clung to numerous childish superstitions, and, having been horribly wounded, devoured the reports of murders and suicides in the belated Sunday papers. He was therefore inclined to pooh-pooh his dramatic and sensational theories in spite of the fact that Max had been so long away from home in such an extraordinary manner. All the same he said to himself: "This sort of thing is so unlike the boy. I've never met a more considerate and sensitive fellow. He wouldn't put Jean to a moment's uneasiness for anything in the world. I'm afraid there's something wrong."

The door was opened by one of the footmen. "Mr. Lorbenstein is calling, madam."

Jean wheeled round joyfully, "Mr. Max?"

"No, miss. Mr. Max's father."

Jean caught her breath. Helen's nostrils widened. Farquhar put down his pipe, and Denham shifted his feet.

"Show him in at once."

III

Outwardly neat in a blue serge suit, with a white thing showing above his waistcoat, a black satin tie with a pearl pin, a hard-boiled shirt, and shoes as small as a woman's, Mr. Jacob J. Lorbenstein was inwardly far from neat. This was only too obvious to everybody from the fact that his face had lost its cherubic pink and that his little blue eyes behind those gold-rimmed glasses were excited by painful emotion.

"I have heard about Max," he said, in a stronger accent than usual, "and that Denham is here to consult you. What do you make of it?"

Jean went over to him quickly, and put her hand through his arm.

"Nothing, so far," said Farquhar quietly. "We don't know what to think. But we are not going to worry yet."

"You're not? Oh."

Mr. Lorbenstein looked from face to face with quick examination. Then he fondled Jean's hand while he related, in short staccato sentences, exactly what he had been told at his house. It tallied, with a few minor differences, with Denham's able account. It was plain that Denham had discussed the trouble with his fellow footman, who had, however, kept back, it was equally plain, the suggestions as to the Klu Klux Klan and the Jewish raid. Mr. Lorbenstein was frightfully agitated, but not in a state of terror.

Then Denham said, "If you will allow me, madam, I'll

do some telephoning. It's about time to get on to the hospitals and advise the police."

"What's that?" Mr. Lorbenstein's voice was high and shrill. "Hospitals . . . Police?"

"Yes, sir. Just as a precautionary measure."

Mr. Lorbenstein marched to Farquhar. "Do you know anything then that I have not been told? I ask you for the truth."

"No, no. Nothing at all. We're equally in the dark."

The old gentleman whipped round upon Denham.

"What do you mean by saying such things? Hospitals, police! It is quite certain that my son is safe. Who would wish to harm him? He has done nothing. He has no enemies. And why should he have had an accident? It is not likely that he has been walking about the streets in evening clothes without a hat. Go to the telephone."

As one who was well accustomed to these quick changes Denham left the room.

And after putting both hands first on his heart and then up to his head, with a deep emotional murmur of, "Oh, my boy, my boy, my beautiful Max," Mr. Lorbenstein made a great effort and took hold of himself. In front of these apparently calm people he felt that he must retain dignity and show courage.

"Excuse me," he said to Helen. "You will understand that I am nervous. I have had a hard day. I am not so young. This is a shock. It may be that there is nothing in it, that I am an old woman. On the other hand I know that Max is not one to put me thoughtlessly into an anxious fever. And there is this dear child."

He went to Jean, stood on the tips of his toes and kissed her.

She choked back a sort of cry and stood rigid.

Her sudden articulate fear was communicated instantly to the old gentleman. He took her in his arms and patted her shoulder, crooned a little and wept, gave and received a temporary comfort in the knowledge that in her was one who loved his boy, his beautiful Max.

Helen understood and was moved. It was simply and beautifully done. But her keen sense of criticism and observation made her say to herself, "very foreign and sweet. Think of Erskine being able to do anything so spontaneous and unaffected. It would be good for him if he could."

Once more Mr. Lorbenstein pulled himself together, but he kept his hand on Jean's arm. He turned to Helen. "Max dined with you last night."

"Yes," said Helen. "He was a great success."

"A great success?" Mr. Lorbenstein wasn't quite sure that he liked that comment. Had he been asked as a friend and a future member of the family, or as an artist, a pianist who had performed to the guests? But as he had had nothing but consideration from the Farquhars he let it go. "Was there perhaps something said that may have jarred or upset my son?"

"I think not," said Helen. "I heard nothing. He seemed perfectly happy, I thought. Didn't you, Jean?"

"No, mumsie. I just remember that I didn't."

"Ah, there is something, maybe, here."

"After everyone had gone and just as Max was going I noticed that he looked . . . chilled, I thought, and depressed. I asked him what was the matter—if he had been bored, or what. It never occurred to me that anyone, except possibly Tony, had said anything to offend

him. He said he was tired. He said, laughing, that the effort of playing the little gentleman had been trying, or some such thing. I didn't think anything of it. He came into this room and he and I and mother and father talked for about an hour. It was the best part of the evening. When he left he was in high spirits—the Max he usually is. Now, looking back. . . ."

"Think very carefully, my dear," urged Mr. Lorbenstein, "there is a clue in this."

Jean thought, with her hand to her forehead. She tried to piece the scene together. People saying "Good-bye." Getting away rather early—very early—with—was it an air of relief? Commonplaces and laughter, handbags hunted for, light wraps recovered, hands crossed and drawn back with the inevitable cliché, the last words at the drawing-room door; mother, more than half glad that the evening was over, full of sparkle and energy: father, genuinely sorry, talking about a trout rod until his friend was called by his wife, and Max, aloof, and rather out of the picture, looking down, with his long dark lashes on a very white face. . . .

"My first impression was," she said, "that he had been hurt."

"Hurt?"

"I mean snubbed, even perhaps insulted."

"Insulted?"

Mr. Lorbenstein threw a quick, enquiring glance from Helen to Farquhar.

"Impossible," said Helen. "Old friends and well-bred people, every one of them."

"Of course," said Farquhar, "such a thing's absurd."

"Um," said Mr. Lorbenstein, drily. "Does breeding

count always in the matter of prejudice? I have not found that it does."

Jean broke it. "Mumsie," she said, "I believed last night that Tony had said something beastly to Max. He laughed it off. He laughed off all my questions. But now, thinking it over, I'm absolutely certain that, in some way or other, Tony's at the bottom of this."

"No, no, no," said Farquhar. "Tony's a very good sportsman. He's taken his beating well."

"I rather wonder," said Helen.

"Tony? Who is this Tony?" asked Mr. Lorbenstein.

"The boy I was engaged to before I went to London. His name is Anthony Northrup."

Mr. Lorbenstein shot up his head, closed his eyes, and seemed to be listening to something. He did this whenever he was faced by a problem to which he must find an instant solution. He had once explained this gesture to a business associate who had noticed its sometimes marvellous results by saying, "I give my subconscious mind a chance from time to time. I hear things in it. It has a way of collecting inspirations."

But he heard nothing at the moment. He waited to give it every chance and then shook his head and fluttered his hands.

"No, no; nothing comes," he said. "Nothing. All the same I feel there is something in what Jean has said about this Tony. . . . It is natural for him to be jealous, angry. In the circumstances every man would be. It was the first time perhaps that he had seen Max, my dear?"

"Yes," said Jean, "or me, since we came back."

"Ah, and you know his handwriting, of course?"

"Yes, very well," said Jean.

Mr. Lorbenstein put up his finger. "It is backhanded as Denham calls it?"

"Yes," said Jean, "It is."

The old gentleman smacked one hand against the other. "Then it is to this Anthony Northrup that we must go at once."

"By Jove," said Farquhar, "I believe you've got something here!"

"The only thing is," said Jean, "that he hasn't got a car and so couldn't have sent the note by a chauffeur."

"But he has friends with chauffeurs. Why couldn't he borrow one?"

Denham opened the door, entered, and stood at attention.

"Well? What have you done?"

Denham faced his old bird, as he called him.

"None of the City hospitals have received a gentleman answering to the description, sir."

"Oh, thank God! And the police?"

"I have stated the facts to the nearest station, sir, and the Captain is sending a responsible man to see you here at once."

"Meantime, go again to the telephone and call up Mr. Anthony Northrup. Mr. Farquhar will speak to him."

Denham ventured a modest smile. "I did that, sir. It came as a hunch. Mr. Northrup left town this morning at nine o'clock. Won't be back for three days. Left no address."

Mr. Lorbenstein threw up his hands.

A footman opened the door.

"A policeman is calling, madam."

There was silence for a moment. Then Mr. Lorbenstein faltered to a chair, sat heavily, groaned deeply, and put his hands to his head.

"Yes, yes, yes," he said, and added, as though thinking aloud, "Everywhere the human soul stands between a hemisphere of light, and another of darkness, while two everlasting hostile races continue to hate and fear."

PART XI

I

It was half past three when Max pushed back his chair from the piano, and, being tortured by an increasing melancholy which carried his music from a joyful rhythm into that of despair, turned on the light.

His reading of the note marked urgent, which suddenly struck him as the cause of his having passed into the shadows, was like a kick in the face. Coming on top of his sister's warning and the subtle manner in which he had been made to feel erroneous by the Farquhars' friends that night, it caught him at a time when his sensitive spirit was already terribly hurt. He had read and reread those serious words, and they seemed more and more to come to him not from an intolerant individual but from all the people in America who, like those at the Farquhars' house, represented race prejudice in its most rigid and irrational form.

As a man who had been encouraged to draw upon a doting and generous father to any extent, gratify whatever whims and tastes had seized him during his musical education in Europe, he had lived in a glorified Bohemia in which genius had rubbed out whatever feeling he had

possessed in his early youth of being different from other boys.

He had known then and wondered why there should have been certain schools at which he could not be entered. He remembered vaguely having heard his father offer to build on a large wing, with a swimming pool and gymnasium, to a preparatory school in New York if the head master would break his rule and take him in. The temptation had been great but the offer reluctantly refused. Sent to Europe to learn to play the piano at his earnest request he had recovered from the sting and smart of being under a stigma with the kindness of the first of his teachers. Since then, with only brief returns to his father, his gift, his face, his simplicity, his charm and his gay heart, had won him innumerable friends and admirers everywhere. Although he had never gone in for Society in the various cities abroad—the mere idea was appalling—the doors of famous ladies had been thrown open to him and he had entered or not as he had chosen, for the fun of the thing. The Duchesse de Bercy, the Duchess of Kensington, the Marchesa Robia della Robia, Crown Princesses of Germany and Austria, cousins of the Kings of Spain and Greece, had all been friends of his. He had met them on equal terms in Paris, London, Venice, Rome, Berlin, Vienna, San Sebastian, Vichy, Biarritz—wherever he had happened to be. He had been invited frequently by the Prince of Wales to supper here and there—not because of his exquisite playing but wholly because of his delightful companionship.

It was startling and almost unbelievable, therefore, to find in his own country a press explosion at the fact that

he, a Jew, was engaged to a Christian American, to be accused by his father of disloyalty to a race to which he had forgotten that he belonged—he had imagined himself to be a citizen of the world who had included among his friends every amusing, talented and civilized person irrespective of race or creed—and to be held up to ridicule by his sister with a prophecy of tragedy if he married, of all girls, Jean.

It was true that the Farquhars, whatever their feelings, had been most blessedly kind, that the flare in the papers had died, and that his father had been won over by an appeal to his sentiment, but these things had left their marks, though he had done his best to ignore them. At his first meeting with members of the most reputable, and therefore the least smart, American people he had been shown quietly and courteously precisely where he stood. It was obvious to him that one of them, and probably a woman, had written the note immediately on her return and sent it white hot by car.

The poor boy flung up his hands. Rather than put his dearly beloved Jean into an invidious position which she might regret at any time he would wipe himself out of her life by death or other means. Death was the easier way, —Death, the consoler.

But was it easy? Accidents lurked round every corner and there were innumerable methods of bringing it about. And yet there were an untold number of unhappy and superfluous people to whom life was less dreaded than death and who lived on and on in ironic misery to a ripe old age. "So precious life is! Even to the old the hours are as a miser's coins."

To go back to the piano and continue his work was

completely out of the question. There were bitter and tragic thoughts in his mind. Music, except that of war, was the last thing to go with mass hostility and the deliberate and organized continuance of hatred and persecution. And so, with a desire for air, and the higher ceiling of the sky, Max went down into the dark hall, opened the door and walked up and down the street.

Unlike Paris, which never sleeps, and has its brief dream disturbed at the temporary cessation of screaming traffic by the slow retreat of market carts, New York was at rest. It looked for the moment like a deserted ant-heap, a disused beehive. All the yellow spots of light which had made the Plaza resemble the Castle of a Dunsany god when Max had seen it last were out. The huge building now loomed darkly against the sky, crowed over in perpetual triumph by Heckscher's golden cock.

A belated car went by, slowed down, turned, and came back. Max had stopped at the shout of his name. He saw that Ruth and her husband Otto Saab, with two or three other people, were the occupants of the car.

Tall, thin, dark, good-looking, and rather over-elated, Saab sprang out.

"Why, hullo Max," he said. "This is funny. We were just talking about you. Ruth and I and the rest are not satisfied with three parties and are going on to Nershwin's studio. Come on in and see a bit of Europe in the middle of New York."

"My dear fellow, no," said Max. "It's far too late."

"Late? Bunkum. Everything's just beginning."

Ruth commanded her brother's presence at the door of the car.

"You must come, Max," she said, a glitter of pearls. "We imagined you at the piano as we passed the house and had a mind to stop and pull you out. This is luck. Nershwin's giving a party to celebrate the opening of his new show. Everybody who's anything in music, art and the stage. The greatest fun! Come on in, you cosmopolite, and see what New York can do."

Before he could protest any further Max was hoisted in and found himself in a pleasant aroma of scent between his sister and a girl with the face of the Mona Lisa and a most hospitable hand.

All right. Good. The homesickness which had pervaded him during his lonely prowl, the longing to transport himself from Fifth Avenue to the Avenue de Bois de Boulogne was not to be instantly gratified. But here was the next best thing. The members of his craft and others allied to it, among whom disturbances of race and creed were utterly unknown. "Thank God," he said to himself, "for the universal touch, the band of brothers. Laugh and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

That was his mood and it was perfectly natural.

He was introduced to his sister's friends, the husband of the Mona Lisa, with a famous banking name, whom he vaguely remembered having seen last year at the highest Baccarat table at Vichy with a steady hand and an indifferent smile, and two young women whose thick black hair had been cut like those of the boys; both beautiful, though painted like cocottes; both as little the worse for wear after three parties as fruit in a steamer basket.

On account of his recent publicity, Max was treated as though he had swum the Channel, won the Davis cup, or made an enormous fortune by clever sleight of hand.

They were thrilled at the idea of being able presently to make an entrance with him and bask in reflected glory. There was much jollification on the way across the Park.

It turned out that Nershwin's studio was in a gigantic building of similar places on the west side, with an appropriately dramatic foyer. It seemed, at first glance, to be the chapel of a rather florid monastery, with its thick pillars and groined ceiling, but this effect was made ridiculous by a large swift elevator run by a coloured man in a bandman's uniform.

The particular studio into which the new arrivals entered through an open door consisted of an enormous room at the end of a narrow passage, with stairs leading up to a gallery at one end of it. Running off to the right and left were lesser but uncramped rooms which might, on normal occasions, be used for eating purposes and sleep. At the moment, like the studio itself, they were completely filled with men and women, some of whom, in Park-like attitudes, were herding on beds, while others crowded round impromptu bars on which there was every known drink. In the main room there were so many people, all with well-known faces, that not only was every perching place fully occupied, but every available inch of the floor, within a few square yards of the piano in the centre, was used for squatting upon.

It was a mad and joyful scene, not so dimly lighted as to destroy its colour or expression, or to take away the striking effect of its being a lovely example of Mediterranean gardening filled with many coloured flowers. There was a pause in the proceedings, and from every mouth in these rooms there rose a hubbub of sounds such

as one hears, on a summer Sunday afternoon, in the public bathing places on the lake at Ouchy-Lausanne.

There were dead and alive bottles of gin and whisky, glasses of every description, and ends of cigarettes wherever they could be placed, and the air was heavy with the cloying aroma of powder and scent and tobacco. After a gasp of surprise and pleasure Max described it to Ruth as the Bohemia of Paris under a powerful magnifying glass.

"That's New York," said Ruth, "as you would know very well if you had seen America first. We apply compound arithmetic to everything over here, otherwise we shouldn't believe that we were doing things as well as we might."

Taking a cynical pleasure in pointing out the celebrities to her expatriated brother Ruth indicated person after person from the standing-room-only space. The stars of the stage and screen and their smaller satellites, composers of popular jingles and the men who wrote their words, playwrights and the authors of best sellers, and the editors of magazines, artists and perpetrators of comics, without which few papers could exist, the extraordinarily fecund men who ground out daily columns—one, at least, was a poet—dancers, sculptors, decorators, dramatic, and literary critics, singers, pianists, violinists and, finally, the host.

Very young to have achieved so many successes on the musical comedy stage, Nershwin had had a better education in music than most of the men of his craft. Even in his popular things there were originality, and style, so that the Nershwin touch was recognizable at once,—a

whimsicality, a tenderness, a peculiar rhythm. In his ambitious efforts, his symphonic Blues, he was already the jazz Stravinsky, the interpreter of negro-futurism with the flavour of Palm Beach. Tall and slight, with the grace of a panther, he led a young and precocious English playwright to the piano to a resounding burst of applause. This man, who had not been mentioned by Ruth, had only just put in an appearance from a party of his own. He, too, was tall and slight, a little precious in his clothes and manner, tired, white-faced and frail. He had lately come into his own after a long and plucky struggle with a brittle, distasteful play, which was daringly and brilliantly conceived and written, and in which he had himself played the leading part with an electrical effect. In addition to being a playwright and an actor he was a composer of songs and a pianist, and it was quite possible that he could also, at a pinch, construct his scenery and paint it, lead his orchestra, and run the box office of his own theatre at one and the same time. He had an amazing flair for the stage, the energy of Niagara, and a name, already renowned, that was the exact opposite to his courageous character. A ubiqitous and unique young man.

Having been clapped on the shoulder by Nershwin, who then slid between the graceful forms of two glittering legitimate stars, from the lips of one of whom he lifted a cigarette, the latest hero dribbled off a sentimental tune to which he sang, with consummate art and a total lack of effort, a lyric bitten with cynicism with a laugh to every rhyme.

It was at the beginning of a readily accepted encore that Otto Saab, now tilted into a tactless desire to say

what he thought by a very heavy drink, drew Max all down the passage to the door. To that much cooler spot came the tinkle of the piano, the grey smoke of a hundred cigarettes and frequent bursts of laughter.

"Now, my dear young friend," he said, with the slightly cross-eyed seriousness of the one glass too many man, "I'm going to take advantage of this opportunity to give you some good advice."

"No, I'm damned if you are."

Max tried to dodge and bolt. He had received all the advice, criticism, kicks, and offers of help that he could stand since he had rushed over to see his father.

But he was pinned to the wall by his portentous brother-in-law before he could make his escape. "You'll be damned if I don't," he said. "In two words, my boy, if you go on with this Farquhar proposition you may as well cut your throat. Now you just take that from me."

"I shall never cut my throat, it's a much too filthy trick."

Max was angry. He resented the impertinent discussion of his affairs in that place and at that hour. He made a huge effort to wrench himself free.

Otto Saab was a tall and muscular person and he held him to the wall. He was not in the habit of having advice refused. He charged large sums for it.

"Then you'll have to borrow a gun, because, right here, I lay it down as truth, Max, you will finish yourself."

"For God's sake, get away!"

There was a yell of laughter, a burst of applause, and the crash of notes.

"Now listen." He was tremendously impressive, though his eyes began to blink. "I'm going to tell you

something that'll make you alter your mind. The time has just about come when our people all over the world are right on top, do you see? We're winning the fight, I tell you. Everything's coming our way. We're in, and we're up, and we're only a yard from being over the last defences, and then the world's in the palms of our hands. We've the money, the power, and the push, and there's nothing that we aren't behind—countries, banking and politics, industries, shipping and law. What a moment to choose to scuttle and run back and tag the name of a Christian on that of Lorbenstein."

"Absolute rot," said Max. "The racial antagonism you're talking about only exists over here. It's completely dead in Europe and that's where I'm going to live."

"Is . . . that . . . so! I see. Well, then, if you know all about it, that's all there is to it. But before we change the subject to one on which I'm supposed to be able to speak, let me add just this. You'll *have* to live over there. The name we shall have in this country for one who holds us up to ridicule and humiliation by allowing himself to be tagged by a Christian hyphen into the Society that's kept us out—well, if you want to know, it's rat."

II

Before Max's anger could find expression—here was a new point of view in the racial argument!— Ruth, who had seen her husband draw her brother away and suspected the former's sobriety, came quickly along the passage.

"What's all this?" she asked. "I didn't bring Max

here to listen in gloomy corners to a lecture about the franc. Come on back, you two. You're missing all the fun."

She laughed, drew Saab away, and broke the tension. She then gathered the two men up and led them back to the smoke hung studio—not altogether sorry that Saab had succeeded in getting in a few strong words on a subject which rankled in her mind. It was obvious that he had done so from the blaze in Max's eyes.

"Listen to this, my dears," she said. "It's perfectly wonderful."

And it was. One of Nershwin's confrères, a short man with a boyish face and thick black hair, was in possession of the piano composing, on the spur of the moment, the music of a piece that was taken haphazard from the advertising pages of a ladies magazine. He sang of stockings and underclothing, night gowns, corsets, beauty restorers and Zip. Solos and duets and choruses were founded by him on these most human and desirable subjects to the delight of all in the rooms. With a brilliant facility of rhyme and melody, both of which he touched with a broad caricature of those in current plays, he worked his way through two short acts and wound up with a finale to which everyone longed to dance. It was a *tour de force.*

During the laughter and shifting that followed Max found himself face to face, to his extreme delight, with Rebou, the French composer,—the man who had written "Ma Femme," and most of the recent hits of the Folies Bergères and the Moulin Rouge that were played by every band.

With ejaculations of real affection they kissed each

other on both cheeks. Yes, Rebou had come to New York for a few weeks to stage certain of his newest songs in one of the Shubert revues. But, mon Dieu, it was indescribable, this city! What immensity, what crowds, what height, what a strange fantastic beauty! What a stage, how lavish. How you say—money to burn. And the number of theatres! It was possible to place all those of Paris in a single street. The kindness too. Amazing. He had been entertained by all the American composers as though he were Offenbach or Arri Fragson or the author of "Valencia" himself! . . . "And you, mon cher, it is for several recitals? . . . No, no, I remember, of course. This marriage. So droll. But why get married, and to an American girl, like a titled Frenchman? You do not need money, is it not? Domesticity,—it does not live with music. And if there are babies—oh, mon Dieu! Of all men you are wedded to music, with a little friend round the corner. Rétirez vous, mon Vieux!"

Max changed the subject quickly. He said, "I don't care where you're staying here. Pack your things and come to my father's house."

Rebou would be enchanted. He was in a hotel that overwhelmed him. It was like a city in which he was lost. And on one side, in a great gap, a thousand devils made noises that split his teeth. And a machine, like a hideous mythical monster, champed great stones between its iron jaws. "But," he added, gravely, "to touch again, with trepidation, on the question of your marriage, so much discussed, my dear Max, permit me to ask you if you have taken into consideration the danger—yes, it is danger—of transplanting an American flower to a Latin

soil. So strange, so different. In almost every other attempt, experiment, trial, there has been failure to acclimatize. Not only the language but the customs, les nuances, the subtle characteristics, the points of view, make it very rash. A girl of high society this, an heiress, I have been told. Will it not be, perhaps, a little cruel, or at least unkind and thoughtless, or shall I say too optimistic, to make such a transition to another and a Bohemian extreme? To you, it is a bore, Society. And the hours you keep, mon cher! The night turned into day. And yet it is your work, your life, and Paris is your mother. During the first fine flash of passion it is well, no doubt. But later, when your music claims you, what of a lonely girl? I offer you my apologies in advance, but is there not the chance that when you are adored by women she may turn to another man? I am your friend, your brother. I esteem and love you, my dear Max, and it is for me, therefore, more than any, to say these things to you, at the risk of anger. I should grieve to see you, whose mistress is music, swept on a wave of passion into the black deep waters of regret and sorrow."

All this was said among a jam of new arrivals, among whom Max and his old friend Rebou stood nose to nose. And it was necessary that it should be cried out in a high voice so that it might be heard above the louder and louder babble.

It seemed to Max that his private affairs had become the property of the world. There was a huge conspiracy, it appeared to him, as he became more bewildered and dazed among that swaying crowd and noise, to crush him out of individual action, to make him feel from the pressure of one side that he was a rat and a renegade and

from the other an impossible person, a pariah dog. And in the small oasis between these heated factions his sister and his dearest friend turned upon him the hideous accusations of selfishness and cruelty.

The other man in his sister's party oozed his way through the phalanx of men and women, made a long arm over several too golden heads and succeeded in passing drinks to Rebou and Max. The place was as red hot as one of the most popular dancing places on a Saturday night. They were welcomed by both and finished at a gulp. In the course of half an hour Rebou scouted about for further drinks and brought them back. Depressed and thirsty Max drank them, trusting that they would dispel the blackness that shrouded his hopes. It may have been owing to the fact that Rebou, like the others, had become inured to synthetic concoctions and infested with an army of protective cocci who fought the poison of these dire things. When, at any rate, he was caught in the whirlpool and swept away, he appeared still to be as sane and healthy as he was before. He waved his hand to Max, shrugged his shoulders, and with a flash of teeth disappeared. But upon Max, who had come from a free Europe, and had been living in a house with a pre-bootlegger cellar in a state of civilization, the poison of that disastrous liquor had a weird effect.

The faces of those about him became larger and larger, until they assumed the bulbous and ever increasing proportions of close-ups on the screen. They swayed towards him and went back again,—red lips, made-up eyes, moving mouths, deep uncanny lines. He lost his legs and floated, bumped like a gasbag into elbows and chins and

noses. He felt that his eyes had become as large as the hard round globes of light that line a Gargantua pier. Curious and astounding words in many languages darted about in his mind like a collection of bizarre fish in a bowl. He saw rockets ascend, and break, with violent explosions, into a rain of coloured stars. He saw enormous flaming Catherine wheels stammer and whirl, throwing off sheets of glittering spray. The laughter all about him became menacing, diabolical, and every note struck on the piano bent the drums of his ears. His head swelled and became so heavy that he felt himself turn upside down with his feather-like legs in the air. He was seized with a deadly sickness and a hand with red hot fingers twisted his entrails round.

With a supreme effort of will, brought about by the senses of fear and decency, he hoisted himself to his feet and with a longing to hide away and die in private staggered through the crowd to the stairs, dragged himself on all fours to an open door at the top and with a cry of gratitude fell flat upon his face.

Here, in what was a cubby hole half-filled with empty bags, trunks and superflous furniture, an immaculate but suffering Max, the pride of musical Europe, the sensitive, gentle, true-hearted, and most unhappy man, lay in one long frightful dream between an armchair with a broken leg and a suitcase plastered with the labels of foreign hotels.

In a wild phantasmagoria of people and places he followed himself through a series of heart-breaking scenes. Always there was Jean a little ahead of him, never touchable, never to be arrested, paying no attention to his agonized cries; running away, escaping with another man,

who had the face and figure of Tony Northrup. He rushed into stations, gasping, breathless, only to see the trains slipping out into which Jean and Tony had clambered as they moved. He followed in aeroplanes through thick, dark, clouds and wind storms, dropping so suddenly through air pockets that his heart leaped out of his mouth. He arrived at swarming termini, dodged antagonistic people who seemed deliberately to impede him, to other stations, only again and again to see those slipping trains in which Jean, his darling, was carried off. He swarmed up glacial mountains, with blood in his shoes and with his knees in his chin—Jean and Tony in sight but out of reach—to fall bruised and weeping as they disappeared. He cried out to this sweet retreating figure, who was in such horror of his touch, "All I ask is your forgiveness. One kind word. It was a mistake—they said it was a mistake, but I wouldn't listen. Jean, Jean, I ask nothing of you but the old kind smile, a friendly word that I may take back with me to tend its blooms."

Hour after hour, poor little devil, he ran and wept and stumbled through this ghastly coma, twisted into knots of poignant physical pain and mental agony, with a throbbing head and a thumping heart and extended lungs. For an hour or two the music and babble of voices continued beneath the gallery, followed by scattered laughs and badinage, as the elevator rose and descended, emptying those rooms. He never heard all this, or the silence, the sudden shatter of the City's noises, or the roar of the passing day.

No one knew that he was lying on the floor of that cubby hole in a hell of torture and regrets, because no sound came from it to arrest an ear. His spirit might

have flicked and gone out, leaving a grey cold corpse between that broken chair and suitcase, and no one would have been any the wiser in the indifferent place. Hour after hour he lay there until the poison was absorbed and the dream had unwound itself to the bitter and dreadful end. Then, at last, he emerged from the tunnel, saw daylight under the crack of the door, staggered to his feet, bewildered, wondered where on earth he was, tottered to the landing in dishevelled evening clothes, saw by his watch that it was half past six, found his way down stairs to the silent and deserted studio, made for the door at the end of the corridor, and let himself into the street.

Oh God, how old and feeble and deserted he was, how humiliated and ashamed. Why hadn't he been permitted to die in that dark close hole and be forever out of hostility and prejudice, the struggle of race against race, and the temptation of committing an act of cruelty upon the girl from whom he must now escape.

From whom he must now escape. That was the thought that went with him up the street and into a taxicab, across the Park and to his father's house.

His sister and Rebou were right. In a way the others were right. Everyone was against him. To one side he was a Jew, to the other he was a rat, and if he snapped his fingers in the face of them all and transplanted Jean to Paris . . . No, no! Oh God! He had been through all that must happen to her and to himself.

He must escape. By way of death with a gun? He could never cut his throat. No. Music called and claimed him. He must play and interpret the joy and sorrow of the Masters. It was his job, his compensation. In what other way, then? He must think and think.

He paid the cab, tottered up the steps and rang the bell. Quick, come!

Denham opened the door.

"My God, Mr. Max. It's you."

"Yes, yes. I'm—I'm ill. Let me pass."

He passed, as Denham, with an open mouth at the sight of him, with a face as white as a sheet, fell back. Then, suddenly alive to the fact that the day had gone, and that his strange absence must have given anxiety to Jean and to his father, he wheeled round.

"Are they worried—frightened?"

"I should say they are," said Denham. "Hospitals . . . police . . ."

"Let them know, at once. Say that I am all right,—sorry to have caused—so sorry to have— Bed, bed."

He swayed upstairs like a drunkard,—stairs, more stairs,—to his room.

"She is merely under the glamour of your music—bewitched," he said. "You will commit a cruel and selfish act,—sacrilege, vandalism. She will wake up before long and return to her own kind,—the fine young Tony Northrup. Draw back, draw back, you Jew, you rat, you renegade, and let this darling, this blessed Damozel, go unharmed, unspoiled. . . ."

"Bed, bed," he said again, and lurched towards it, head first, and once more fell on his face.

PART XII

I

DENHAM admired Max as a pianist beyond even his capacity of description. Below stairs he had laid it down frequently as one who knew and loved music—he had conducted a regimental orchestra of mouth organs behind the trenches, which had added considerably to the fame and glory of the East Surreys—that he had never 'eard nothing like it in his blinkin' puff. Having sacrificed several hours of his much-needed sleep, night after night, in order to crouch outside the door of the music room, he had given it out as his definite opinion that "that boy's *got* it. It's the real stuff. I know the work of most of the 'ot ones of my time, but that young feller knocks spots off the 'ole bilin' lot. He knows something and does something that puts you out of trouble—the same as one of those glorious days in Switzerland when the colour and clearness make it all far too good to be true. He *'as* imagination and he *is* imagination, and he just takes you up to the gate and leads you in."

And as for Max as a man he was equally emotional and enthusiastic. "He's kind, if you know what I mean, and precious few do. Animals 'ud go to 'im if they was 'urt—which is the final test to my mind. Even a thrush

'ud feed out of 'is 'and, or a swan with a couple of cygnets. You trust 'im because 'e trusts you and understands. 'E's got no blinkin' bile about anybody, never mind 'oo they are. And he's merry and can laugh like a child and I put that down to the fact that 'e's one of the very few genuine 'appy fellers that's knockin' about on earth. Some people might laugh and others inclined to be shocked if I summed 'is character up by saying there's a bit of Christ about 'im. In other words 'e's a gentleman, which is pretty much the same."

Conceive his excitement and delight, therefore, when he dashed to the telephone, though under his emotion there was a deep concern at the physical appearance of his hero.

He asked for Mr. Farquhar.

"That you, Denham?"

"Yessir."

Farquhar was somewhat breathless. He had taken the stairs at a rush. Hating the telephone and its impertinent interference—he held that this instrument had broken down the portcullis of every man's castle—he had insisted, when his house was built, on isolating it to a special room in the hall. It was all against his wishes that Helen had prevailed upon its installer to connect it to her room.

"Any—anything to report?" he asked.

"Mr. Max 'as turned up, sir. About a minute ago."

"What! . . . By George, that's good. By George, it is."

"Yes, by gum! it is, sir."

There was something a little unsteady in both those voices—or was it the fault of the telephone?

"Where has he been—did he say? But I won't stop to ask any questions. They're in a panic upstairs."

"Just this, sir. He didn't give any information, but, between you and me, sir, private, he looks—well, awful. All crushed like and white. My theory is, hasty, that if 'e hasn't been under a steam-roller, it's prohibition."

"All right, Denham. Thanks."

He found Helen, Jean, and Mr. Lorbenstein on their feet. All of them, and especially the old gentleman, looked worn and dragged. After the interview with the stalwart and gruff policeman—in itself, because of its suggestion, a thing of horror—they had killed time, with dreadful impotence, waiting, waiting—for what?

In that city, as in every other, and in these times, more, it would seem than in any that had gone, because of sensational front pages and hysteria, not a day was without its tragedies. There were brutal hold-ups, murder, attempted assassination, derailment of trains, incendiarism, death under the wheels of traffic, communistic outbreaks, political insanities. Under which of these and numerous other everyday headings was Max to find a place?

"He's just come home," said Farquhar. "By George, that's good. By George, it is."

Mr. Lorbenstein, who had held up remarkably well, collapsed into a chair. Helen heaved a sigh, opened her little bag, took out a powder box and went all over her face. Jean went quietly to one of the windows, turned her face away from the others and, for the first time in her life, deliberately gave thanks unto God.

"There was no time," said Farquhar, cheerfully, "to ask Denham for details. But I gathered that Max is

perfectly all right. Perfectly. Jean put her finger on it, hours ago, when she said that he was wool-gathering, in my opinion. One of his musical friends either called for him last night or rang him up, and forgetting all about time, he's been playing ever since. It seems to me that there must be something so refreshing about music. . . ."

On he went, talking through his hat, trying his damnedest, uncharacteristically, to swing things back to normal, so that Jean and the old gentleman might become convalescent after that anxious strain before they faced the new worry of finding Max "all crushed and white" as Denham had said.

But nobody paid the least attention to him. They let him babble and pursued their thoughts. Finally, in the middle of one of his best bits of ordinaryness, Mr. Lorbenstein got up, went to Helen and held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said, "thank you. I am grateful. Your kindness and sympathy will be among my best memories. If you will excuse me I will go home to my son."

Helen smiled and said the appropriate thing. She always had the appropriate thing on tap. But she was tired for once. She felt the need of a hot bath, tinctured with delicious salts, and then to sit very still, with her eyes shut, and her dynamic engine switched off, while her maid moved soft fingers across her forehead and behind her ears.

Mr. Lorbenstein went to Farquhar. "Thank *you,*" he said. "I understand better now why Paris remained in the hands of the French. The police shall be informed."

Jean was waiting for him at the door.

"I'm coming with you," she said. "Mumsie, don't wait for me—I shall have dinner with Max."

She kissed her hand first to Helen and then to her father and ran it through Mr. Lorbenstein's arm. She felt as though she had just crashed on the brakes at a crossing within a few feet of an express train in the dark.

Farquhar, in silence, loaded his pipe, but before he was ready to light it he heard the door of a car click and the crunching of tires.

II

After having revelled for several moments in a sense of relief, and being luckily unendowed with the uncanny gift that enables people to see into the future, Helen transferred herself lazily and with her usual grace, to a sofa. There was a smile of admiration and respect in her eyes as she looked at the man who was called her husband by law.

She said, "I shall make it necessary for you to get larger hats, with my compliments. All the same I have to say that domesticity and partnership are working wonders on you."

It occurred to Farquhar that she might be more comfortable if he put another cushion behind her head. It occurred to him, also, not for the first time lately, how nice it would be if she were to make a cushion of him.

"It's perfectly easy to get larger hats," he said. "Thank you very much. What sort of wonders do you mean?"

How well she knew the simple formula of concentrat-

ing a man's whole interest by leading him into a discussion about himself.

"Well, in this case, your undramatic steadiness kept us from slipping into hysterics. You were less the retired sea captain with his head full of portside memories and more the man who is trying to make up his mind to throw in his lot with his wife than ever before. It was good."

It was then that Farquhar lit his pipe. "When will you begin to understand," he said, "that I have, definitely, thrown in my lot with you?"

She had, as a matter of fact, gone much further than the beginning of such an understanding. From every well-known sign she knew that he had cast his anchor at home—or rather wherever she happened to be. It had become easy for her to see that not only had his long respect been deepened and strengthened by her attitude during their domestic trouble but that he liked her now. She chuckled over this word. Given peace of mind, and the leisure in which to develop her tactics, she knew that, if she cared to do so, she could turn it into love.

The point was, did she care? Was she prepared, after having been left a free lance so long, to give up her independence and share her life with a man who had found his way home so late? Had he any of the sufficiently attractive qualities to make it worth her while to forgive him for his philandering and neglect, and swallow her pride?

Yes, he had proved to her that he had. His behaviour both ways on the Atlantic, in London and Paris, and recently in New York, had made it abundantly clear that he was a man to cultivate.

Age—though she scoffed at his ridiculous and morbid reiteration of being old at fifty-five—had ripened him. He had greatly improved. He had rather miraculously grown out of selfishness. He had succeeded, somehow or other, in shedding intolerance and impatience, and he wasn't so critical. His old contempt of other people's hobbies and foibles had given place to a more kindly attitude. He had stepped down from the perch of the spoiled, too-rich, one-eyed man, who had walked through life with his chin in the air, to average earth. He was a serious person who could be taken seriously. His eager desire to shoulder his responsibilities made him one for whom others were glad to be responsible. In giving sympathy he obtained it, and there was something so fine in his hard-won humbleness, and so pitiable in his wish to be given a place, that he won compassion and gained respect.

So she said, bringing things to a point although she was an artist in tangents, "By which you mean that even after Jean is married and our worries are over your intention is to be good?" It was not by accident that she used his word.

"Exactly that," he said.

But it was utterly against her nature to allow this arrangement to go through without a certain amount of fun. She had all a cat's delight in playing with her victims. There was the possibility here of a very charming intrigue—a rather original intrigue, because it wasn't every day that a woman had the chance of conducting a lover-like episode with a man to whom she had been married for over twenty-five years. And he was a very good-looking person.

"That's all very well from your point of view, but have you considered mine?"

That was a difficult question to answer as she intended it to be.

"I've tried to do so," he said, with a curious boyishness. "And once or twice lately you've encouraged me to hope that it's the same, or that I may be able to make it the same, as mine is. If you've managed to give it any thought during this troublesome time, will you let me know? If you've decided that I shall be a white elephant about the house you've only to say so, of course. I'll take the kick and get out."

"That's honest and nice," she said. "We'll argue the matter, then."

"Thanks. That's great."

He put down his pipe, left his inevitable stand with his back to the fire, drew up a chair and sat down. It was easy to see from whom Jean had inherited her sometimes disconcerting directness.

Old? At fifty-five? Why, good Heavens, the man hadn't a line on his face. He was as fit as an athlete, for all his white hair and regrets. What an admirable nose and chin! Yes, he was an astonishing good-looking person.

He leaned forward eagerly.

"I find that I'm sick of cities," she said. "Does that make any difference to you?"

"I've always been sick of cities. I'd never go near the damn things except to get clothes."

"I can't swear to it, but I believe I'm coming to a mood for a house with a garden—an old house and an old garden, with clipped yews and lavender beds, ancient trees,

sweeping lawns, and peace. Which must be, therefore, in England."

"Jolly good," he said. "Somewhere near a golf course, and a trout stream, with good rough shooting on the place. Say the word and we'll buy one."

Her first shot had gone through the bull. She had sighted it carefully.

"But," she went on to say, "what if I discover in the next few weeks—I don't want to move again yet—that what's coming over me is the Wanderlust—the sort of antithesis of home sickness, the urge to get away from people and chatter and functions, dressing, and being a slave?"

"I don't care," he said. "It's all the same to me."

"What! You'd have the patience to follow me in and out of places all over the map of Europe where we should never see a tourist or a baccarat room, or a hotel with three stars?"

"I said that I'd thrown in my lot."

"There'd be nothing for you to do. I mean nothing in the way of sport."

"I want to be with you."

"You think that would be sport enough?"

"Call it that if you like."

She laughed and so did he. At least he wrinkled up his eyes.

"But you'd much prefer a country house with certain regular sports?"

"Yes," he said, "I should. But it isn't for me to choose."

"But don't you think you ought to have some sort of say in the matter?"

"No. I don't see why I should. I'm asking a good deal of you."

She took a leaf out of his book, and Jean's book, and faced him up.

"What precisely *are* you asking of me?"

He was silent for a moment, but not because of embarrassment and self-consciousness. He wanted to choose words that were absolutely honest and simple, impossible to misunderstand.

And so he said, "Forgiveness, friendship, trust, patience, equal loyalty."

She was surprised and disappointed at his stopping there. "Nothing else?" she asked.

"Don't you think then that's enough?"

"Do you?"

"I've said that it is," he said.

And she could see that he meant what he said. Good Heavens, then, the man had achieved such humbleness as to be content with no more than these! For an instant the devil in her tempted her sorely to force him to say the thing for which he wasn't going to ask and never expected to get. Damn it, she was beautiful enough and woman enough to take it for granted that that was among his hopes. . . . There was, of course, the vaguest possibility that she might be wrong. . . . Then, too, it might be a little unfair to take advantage of his being a prodigal, and a debtor, and make him go so far.

"Very well, I accept," she said, giving him her hand.

He seized it in a close grip and held it while he spoke. "I'm most frightfully obliged—and grateful. I'll do my damnedest not to get in your way."

"And I'll do mine to see that you do," she thought.

"Then that's settled," she said. "Mr. and Mrs. Erskine Dalbeattie Farquhar will be seen about together. . . . There'll be gossip, you know!"

"I don't care this time."

"Nasty-minded people will say that we've fallen in love."

"All right, let 'em, if it does 'em any good."

It would do everybody good.

She let him see that she had a mind to move. It was perfectly easy to help her up. He had forgotten to let go her hand.

"And now, at last, for a bath."

"Oh, I'm beastly sorry," he said, "I've been keeping you."

He was standing rather close.

What was more natural, under the circumstances, than that she should put her head on his chest, a very lovely head. Damn it, the man was her husband and she was a little tired.

He liked it very much. Tremendously, in fact.

She said, "I'm a little tired."

And it occurred to him that it might make her more comfortable if he supported her with his arm.

Whereupon she raised her face and there was a smile on her lips. "You *are* a funny old thing," she said. "But you must scratch the old, my dear."

He actually laughed at that. Farquhar—if you please. But it wasn't all a laugh. There was something in his throat.

After a moment of utter thankfulness at the knowledge that he belonged, he kissed her on the cheek.

And then she went to the door. Bath and salts were still

required, though not any longer the fingers of a maid on her head.

"You may fetch me in about an hour. We dine together tonight."

"Very jolly," he said.

She waved her hand and left. And as she closed the door she gave a quiet chuckle. "The cheek?" she said to herself. "Oh bless you, no. Nothing like that, my dear."

And when she had gone, that charming feminine creature who had courage and kindness and the inestimable gift of laughter, Farquhar squared his shoulders.

"Compensation? . . . Yes indeed, oh God."

III

But they didn't dine together that night. Jean returned and joined them.

She said, "Mumsie, Max is asleep. Simply dead asleep. When we went up to his room his clothes were lying in a heap on the floor. He had shed them and let them drop. Mr. Lorbenstein said, after gazing at him anxiously, 'Thank God, my boy is safe. But he has been through something that has exhausted his mind as well as his body. We must let him have it out.' He never stirred at our whispers, or when Mr. Lorbenstein put his hand on his head and found it hot, and was frightened, and then tucked the clothes round his shoulders. And when I kissed him he seemed to be miles away—a sleeping spirit in a worn-out body."

Her voice broke.

Presently she said, "Mumsie, I don't know why, but

I'm more worried now than at any time during the day—this horrible day. He's ill—but it isn't that altogether, because he's strong. It's . . . I don't know how to put it—but it's an inside hurt. I know Max, and it's that that comes to me. Something's happened. I don't know what it is but . . . it's rather terrible."

That night, and during many other days and nights, Helen and Farquhar were required to forget themselves and each other and devote their thoughts to Jean.

"Consideration, like an angel, came and whipped the offending Adam," out of them.

Jean's fright spread to them from the moment that she returned from the Lorbenstein house—Max was still asleep—and said, her eyes very large and with a tremble on her lips, "Mumsie, I'm not allowed to see Max. Mr. Lorbenstein came down and told me that those are the doctor's orders. He said that he *is* ill, very ill, and that the doctor will have all he can do to prevent a very bad breakdown. His father and the nurses are the only people who are to go to his room. What could have happened that night?"

At the beginning Jean was restless, bewildered, jealous of the nurses, angry at times. She argued that she, of all people, had the right to be with Max. The more so because he was ill. The doctor must be a fool. Max needed, and would be lost, without her. He was when he was well. It was all wrong to keep her away. Then it began to dawn upon her that he was very much worse than they gave out, and that Max had begged them not to let her know. Under the shock of this carking thought she went about like a wandering spirit, aimless, with the feeling that she had been disconnected from life. She ate

and slept and dressed, listened to people talk, heard the incessant roar of traffic, and went through the routine of living while appearing to be outside. Her perspective altered, and although she haunted her father and mother they seemed to be moving on another dimension, at a different angle from hers. Max was everything—light, sun, laughter, responsibility, the power that made her heart beat. She was so much his and of him that to be away, shut out, alone, made her seem to be nothing, a mere automaton.

What Helen and Farquhar thought was influenced by two most curious things. The first was a personal call by Mr. Lorbenstein at the end of the second day. He seemed deliberately to have chosen a moment when Jean, after much persuasion, had gone out for a walk. He was quiet, courteous, and as friendly as ever, but, strangely enough, without the dramatic look of anxiety which, under the circumstances, would have been characteristic of him.

His visit was brief and hurried, and gave Helen the distinct though unexplainable, impression that he was eager to avoid Jean. He said that Max was improving slowly. He was not suffering so much from the dire effects of poisoned drinks as, they must understand, from a mental shock, at present unexplained. It might be necessary to keep him isolated, he said, except for the nurses and himself and the doctor, for several weeks, perhaps. It was impossible to say. Under the circumstances, then, it might be as well if Mrs. Farquhar desisted—er, held up, put off, suspended—that was the word, he thought—"her efforts in the direction of a trousseau for Jean. You see, these things get out of date."

And having taken what was obviously a pretty high

jump, and sent his love to Jean, Mr. Lorbenstein bowed himself out.

There might have been nothing to puzzle about in this suggestion, and they couldn't see why there should be. All the same when Helen said "I think we'll forget to mention this to Jean," Farquhar agreed.

Mr. Lorbenstein continued to be punctilious in his morning and evening reports. Nine and half past five. "Nothing to boast about. A slight improvement. Slight but undoubted. Must be kept from everyone. My warm regards."

The second of these things was more than curious and brought things to a head.

One afternoon, at the end of a week, Farquhar happened to walk level with Denham in Fifty-seven Street. If he hadn't been deeply concerned and anxious he would have recognized this man, although he was wearing private clothes and his private expression, and had a word or two.

As it was it was Denham, rather palpably under the influence of cocktails, who recognized him and spoke.

"Good afternoon, sir," he said, flickering his hand to his ear.

"Oh, how are you, Denham? Glad to see you."

"The same here, sir."

Denham fell in step.

"Lots of troubles these times."

"My theory turned out to be right about prohibition, eh sir?" He gave a laugh and jerked his tie. "'Owever, thank Gord we 'aven't to talk about blindness or anything like that. There's lots of cases about."

"Thank God, no," said Farquhar. "It's a nasty business

though. A whole week already with nurses and even Miss Jean kept out."

Denham shot round his head.

"Nurses?" He echoed the word with astonishment. "Where?"

Farquhar was more than astonished. "You haven't left Mr. Lorbenstein, have you?"

"No, sir. Nor is it likely. I'm perfectly satisfied."

"Then I don't understand what you mean."

He spoke sharply.

It had the effect of giving Denham a jerk. But he remained astonished and there it was.

"A whole week already with nurses," he repeated. "Beg pardon, sir, but to the best of my knowledge and belief, I 'aven't seen no nurses . . . Nurses? Why?"

Farquhar drew up short.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have been in Mr. Lorbenstein's house and have seen no evidence of Mr. Max's illness? You must be drunk, Denham."

"Well, sir, this is my day off, and I won't deny but what I've 'ad a spot or two with a pal. But I'm not drunk by at least thirteen, and even then I could pass the sentry.—And what I say is said with a knowledge of the facts. There 'ave not been no nurses in Mr. Lorbenstein's 'ouse, sir, for the simple reason that Mr. Max, after a couple of quiet days, has neither been ill nor there."

"What?" It appeared to Farquhar that he himself must be drunk.

His amazement puzzled Denham.

He said, "I don't know whether I'm sayin' anything I oughtn't—I've 'ad no orders—but of course I thought as 'ow Miss Jean and you, sir, would be the first to be told

by my old gentleman all about Mr. Max. Why, I saw him get into the car a matter of four days ago, sir, with luggage,—and bar a bit of paleness he looked quite fit to me. He's been stayin' at our country place on Long Island, sir, along with Mrs. Otto Saab."

"I see," said Farquhar. "Thanks. Good day."

"Good day to you, sir."

An ex-Sergeant Major hand was flicked up to an ear.

Farquhar called a taxi, told the driver to take him to Mr. Lorbenstein's house, "like hell," and sat bolt upright with blazing eyes.

There was some damned chicanery here! For some unaccountable reason there was a trick in all this. What on earth did it mean? Denham couldn't have manufactured this story. He was a perfectly decent, responsible fellow, very far from drunk. And yet it was preposterous to imagine that Max who adored Jean, and his charming and friendly father whose joy in the approaching marriage had been very moving at times, should deliberately have made her suffer for God only knew what strange misunderstanding that they were not frank enough to explain.

"Max," he said to himself, "why, Max is the . . . the kindest, most humane, most loving and lovable . . . and as to Mr. Lorbenstein I've never met anyone so thoughtful, gentle and punctilious. . . . By George, I give it up."

But there was anger and resentment all about him in the middle of his maze because he could see the more and more heartbreaking sight of his daughter looking like a young bird that had fallen out of its nest. *He* was no use to her and Helen not much more. She was lost without this man.

Only once had he seen such love as hers, such a pride of possession, so deep and true and unselfish a devotion, such an ecstasy of protection. . . .

He paid off the cab, darted across the wide pavement, up the pompous steps and rang the bell.

"Is Mr. Lorbenstein at home?"

He's in, sir, and if you have an appointment. . . ."

"I haven't. Send in my name."

"Very good, sir."

Farquhar marched up and down the foyer.

What in the name of all that was . . . The gay Jean without a single laugh . . . It was quiet, this place; might be miles away from streets . . . an underhanded business if Denham hadn't been lying . . .

"Mr. Lorbenstein will see you, sir."

"Where is he?"

"In the music room, sir."

"All right. I know the way."

Farquhar mounted the stairs, opened the door of the music room, and went in.

Mr. Lorbenstein was seated at the piano with his shoulders hunched and his hands on the keys, limply. Tears were chasing each other down his face and dripping from his chin. He didn't look up when he was aware of Farquhar's presence. He merely shook his head and held out his right hand. He looked old and frail.

Farquhar said, "What is it? What's the matter?" and hurried forward.

The old gentleman gave a sob.

"Has it anything to do with Max? Where is he? What *is* the matter here?"

Mr. Lorbenstein took Farquhar's hand in both his own

and looked up, though he couldn't see through his glasses.

"The matter here, my friend," he said, very brokenly, "is that Max has been burning himself at the stake. Behind my unwilling deception he has been sacrificing himself on the black and godless altar of intolerance and prejudice. . . . I beg you to let me finish if I can. In his own words he has given way to the combined attacks of your people and mine. He has drawn back from what one side called cruelty and vandalism—the other ratting and disloyalty. He is gone."

He put his head on Farquhar's arm and wept.

Farquhar was aghast.

He managed to say, "Gone? But surely to God, you . . . you don't ask me to believe that Max has *left* Jean simply because of the damned impertinent interference of people who talk about caste and race? You and I gave our consent."

"That was not enough. The others continued to fight. But it is for Jean's good, to ensure Jean's future happiness—he would have faced hostility—that Max has made an escape. He did not put a bullet through his brains and is alive. He sailed this afternoon. But it is not life. He has a broken heart."

Farquhar could see a picture of Jean, staggered, struck down, crumpled. . . .

Mr. Lorbenstein went on through his tears.

"You will understand that it demanded great courage of Max to go without seeing Jean and saying a—a last goodbye. He wished to spare her that. You will give her this. And with it his love, and my love, and a prayer for God's mercy."

He got up as though he were at the end of his strength. But he wasn't at the end of his strength.

As Farquhar went to the door with a letter in his hand he raised his arms and his voice, and cried out loudly, supporting himself on the piano to which he clung as the symbol of Max, *"The tree of liberty is being killed by the hatred of our two races. It is a dying tree. Prejudice and intolerance are eating at its roots. Its branches are snapping, and its leaves are falling, and who is there in all this world to water it with kindness and good-will?"*

IV

Farquhar walked home slowly.

Civilization? Barbarism was the better word, he thought. We were not moving on, but slipping back. Fear, hate, jealousy, and persecution were rampant. What were the Churches doing? What was the use of old and new religions? Where was the influence of a League of Nations, a World Court, or any other of the numerous and high-sounding institutions which worked for the end of hostility when Jews and Gentiles were allowed to loathe each other as in the old bad days? Was there nothing to be done?

A queer business, life. Was it wholly inane and accidental? Was it a tale of folly and of woe, of hope against hope, the bitter dregs of strife ending merely in death? Was it, like history, little else than a picture of human crimes and misfortunes, indiscriminate in its treatment of good and bad, kind and cruel, wise and ignorant? Was it just a blunder and a shame, an intense and abortive struggle on a sort of temporary landing forever at the

mercy of a ruinous sea, so that what was built up when the tide was out was broken down on its return?

In a mood of heavy depression Farquhar asked himself these questions and was bound to leave them unanswered. All he knew at the age of fifty-five was summed up in words of Amiel, which he had used before. "Life is the apprenticeship to progressive renunciation; to the steady diminution of our claims, of our hopes, of our powers, of our liberty." Unlike Gamlingay, who held that he had discovered the solution and the reward, he could only venture upon the most humble hope that in spite of changes, creeds, philosophies, and out-worn systems, God remained. If that were so then there was compensation for the man who played straight and was decent, who was charitable and cultivated kindness, who struggled to be unselfish and knuckled down with courage to disillusion, disappointment, ingratitude and grief.

As to courage, more of that was demanded of him in delivering Max's letter to Jean, than he had ever been required to show in his life. It seemed to him that he had been asked, as a punishment for his former neglect, to hand her a knife with which to cut out her heart.

He found her in the morning room with Helen. She was standing in his particular place with her back to the fire. She had evidently just come in. From driving, he thought, by the colour on her face. The wind was keen that day. And it inspired him to see that she had taken a grip on herself and was among them, and of them, again. Had she the grit, the Helen grit, to take this blow standing? Was there anything in blood and caste when it came to a show-down?

"Tony's been here," she said.

"Oh?"

"I withdrew all the nasty things I've been saying about him. He *is* a good sportsman, I find."

"That's good," said Farquhar. Please God, in him there might be compensation.

Helen noticed that Farquhar didn't go for his pipe, and that, instead of standing up to dominate, as was his rather fatuous way, even among women, he sat down heavily and put his hand to his head.

Good Heavens, was there something new and worse?

"Where have you been, Father?"

"Exercising," he said. "At the end of a long walk I ran into Denham. After certain things that he told me I went to see Mr. Lorbenstein. He asked me to give you this."

He took out the letter.

Jean didn't move.

"What is it?"

"A letter from Max."

"From Max? . . . Did you see him?"

"No," said Farquhar. "He's gone."

"Gone?"

There was a ring of terror in Jean's voice. But still she was unable to move.

"Are you—trying to tell me—that Max is dead?"

Farquhar said, striving to temper the blow, "No, not dead. But not much more than alive, after having, as his father said, 'burned himself at the stake, sacrificed himself on the godless altar of intolerance and prejudice.' "

Jean said, swaying a little, "I don't understand."

Farquhar kept his voice steady and quiet. There might be something in example that would help.

"He was thinking solely about you, and your future happiness," he said.

Then he got up, went to Jean, held her trembling body tight for a moment, kissed her, put the letter in her hand, and turned to his wife.

"It's time to dress. Shall I take you up?"

Whereupon, guessing that Max was about to say something to Jean, in his letter, that was too sacred to be shared, Helen walked quickly to the door.

One compassionate backward glance showed them that young and lovely girl holding a few brave and beautiful words of renunciation and sacrifice in a shaking hand.

At eleven o'clock, when Helen went into Jean's bedroom, she saw that a little medallion of the Madonna had been hung round the picture of Max.

THE END

CASTE

HAMILTON

PUTNAM